The Black Cat

July 1918

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Nuxated Iron to Help Make Healthier Women and Stronger, Sturdier Men

Say These City Physicians—By Enriching the Blood and Creating Thousands of New Red Blood Cells It Increases the Strength and Endurance of Delicate, Nervous, Run-Down Folks in Two Weeks' Time in Many Instances

SINCE the discovery of organic iron, Nuxated Iron or "Fer Nuxate," as the French call it, has taken the country by storm, it is conservatively estimated that over three million people annually are taking it in this country alone. Most astonishing results are reported from its use by both physicians and laymen.

Dr. Ferdinand King, a New York physician and Medical Author, when interviewed on this subject, said: "There can be no sturdy iron men without iron. Pallor means anæmia. Anæmia means iron deficiency. The skin of anæmic men and women is pale; the flesh flabby. The muscles lack tone; the brain fags and the memory fails and often they become weak, nervous, irritable, despondent and melancholy. When the iron goes from the blood of women, the roses go from their cheeks.

"Therefore, you should supply the iron deficiency in your food by using some form of organic iron, just as you would use salt when your food has not enough salt."

Dr. James Francis Sullivan, formerly Physician of Bellevue Hospital (Out-Door Dept.), New York, and the Westchester County Hospital, says: "In my talks to physicians I have strongly emphasized the great necessity of their making blood examinations of their weak, anemic, run down patients. Thousands of persons go on suffering year after year, doctoring themselves for all kinds of ills, when the real and true cause underlying their condition is simply a lack of sufficient iron in the red blood corpuscles to enable nature to transform the food they eat into brawn, muscle tissue and brain. But beware of the old forms of metallic iron which frequently do more harm than good.

"Notwithstanding all that has been said and written on this subject by physicians formerly connected with well known hospitals thousands of people still insist in dosing themselves with metallic iron simply, I suppose, because it costs a few cents less. I strongly advise readers in all cases, to get a physician's prescription for organic iron—Nuxated Iron—or if you don't want to go to this trouble then purchase only Nuxated Iron in its original packages and see that this particular name (Nuxated Iron) appears on the package."

If you are not strong or well, you owe it to yourself to make the following test: See how long you can work or how far you can walk without becoming tired. Next take two five-grain tablets of ordinary Nuxated Iron three times per day after meals for two weeks. Then test your strength again and see how much you have gained. Numbers of nervous, run-down people who were ailing all the while have most astonishingly increased their strength and endurance simply by taking iron in the proper form.

Below is Dr. Sullivan's prescription for enriching the blood and helping to make strong, keen, red-blooded Americans—men and women who dare and do.

MANUFACTURER'S NOTE: Nuxated iron, which is prescribed and recommended above by physicians, is not a secret remedy, but one which is well known to druggists everywhere. Unlike the older inorganic iron products, it is easily assimilated, does not injure the teeth, make them black, nor upset the stomach. The manufacturers guarantee successful and entirely satisfactory results to every purchaser or they will refund your money. It is dispensed by all good druggists and general stores.

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THE BLACK CAT CLUB

For Readers and Writers

WITH this number, the editors are instituting a change in the Black Cat Club. While the object of the club, the stimulation of interest in short story writing by reading, study and criticism of Black Cat stories, remains the same, the prize awards for criticisms have been doubled and the prize for the best story each month canceled.

This change has been effected because the editors believe that the critics rather than the authors, who receive regular rates for their work, should have the encouragement afforded by the club's cash prizes.

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER

The club is composed of readers of the Black Cat. To become a member it is only necessary to subscribe to the magazine for a year. The price is $1.50, which includes the beautiful Good Luck club emblem of rose gold. If you are already a subscriber, you may become a member for the term that your subscription has to run.

CASH PRIZES

Prizes of $50 will be awarded to the club members each month. One prize of $10, two of $5, four of $2.50, and ten prizes of $1 each will be awarded to members sending in the best criticisms. An additional prize of $10 will be awarded to the member who secures the greatest number of new members each month. In other words, the Black Cat Club wants a local chapter in your town. If you are a member of a literary club, convert it into a local chapter by persuading its members to send in their subscriptions for the Black Cat.

CONDITIONS OF THE CONTEST

Write criticisms of the stories in the order that they appeal to you. All criticisms must be received at the office of the Black Cat not later than the 15th of the month following publication. (The criticisms of this number must be in not later than August 15th.) Prizes will be awarded as soon thereafter as possible and announced in the third issue following.

NICHOLAS DRAKOS GOES HOME by James Henry Thompson was the prize winning story for April. Prizes for criticism were awarded to the following persons, in order named: Mrs. John R. Powell, St. Louis, Mo.; John J. Leary, Chicago, Ills.; Miss Florence M. Eastland, Long Beach, Cal.; Miss Ada Belew, Galva, Ia.; L. S. Hutchens, Baileysville, W. Va.; Miss Harriette Wilbur, Duluth, Minn.; Edward B. Fenn, Meriden, Conn.; Miss Catherine Pittman, Ross, Cal.; Miss Vina M. Macauley, Beloit, Wis.

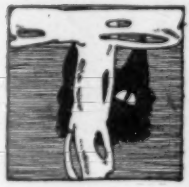
Nicholas Drakos Goes Home is a story of ensnaring circumstances in which unexpected tragedy prevails. The style is vivid, the locale new, and the motive for the tragedy unique. It is full of skillful phrasing and apt comparisons, but is overdone if anything in this respect especially in the introduction. Three or four crisp paragraphs at the utmost would have launched the story, whereas the author fills two pages with pictures and reflections. Nicholas, himself, fortunately is a sufficiently striking figure to hold one's attention until

(*Continued on page* 44)

THE LITTLE MAVERICK

By ELSINORE ROBINSON CROWELL

The little maverick is mannish in dress, in talk, in ambition and enterprise. Even in the one and only moment of feminine weakness her comment is distinctly masculine.



THE western beef drummer looked at the girl in khaki. In fact, he had been looking at her for the last half hour with increasingly intimate smile and insinuating eyebrows. He was a lovely drummer, oiled and scented, sport-shirted and striped-panted. And the girl was a lovely girl, really lovely. Her skin was as golden as her khaki riding breeches, but it was gold over rose and fire, and her clear hazel eyes stared dreamily from under a flare of tawny curls. She perched on the top step of the mining hotel, and her scarlet mouth moved in liquid rhythm of gum chewing. She was some pickin's, the drummer concluded, and added a tender cough to his other lures. The girl swung her eyes slightly in his direction and coyly received his enraptured glare. Victory was his. Hitching his pants a bit further from his near-silk ankles, and winking triumphantly at the intent audience of miners and cowboys, he edged nearer.

"Well, what do you think of me, sweetness?" he tenderly queried. "Sweetness" dropped her eyes demurely, and drew a tendril of gum a good foot from her hesitating smile. Slowly returning the gum, she turned an innocent gaze full upon him, and calmly remarked:

"I think you're a damn fool." Then she strolled leisurely away, slapping her trousered leg with a coiled lariat.

Joy shook the roof of the hotel, rolled in hoots and yelps down the street, while with popping eyes the drummer hurriedly withdrew. Particularly conspicuous were the mirthful snorts of one Jerry Malone. Many had been the times when he was unable to join in the general mirth over that pert young woman's rejoinders, he being the goat annexed thereto; therefore his present bliss.

Jerry was not lovely. He was huge, sprawling-jointed and grinning, with mazed, helpless-looking eyes, and hair that was merely hair. However it may be well to warn you that Jerry's sprawling joints are ball-bearing and built for soft and fearful speed. Also it is not wise to count too greatly on either the amazement or helplessness of his youthful eyes. This latter fact the delectable person in breeches disregarded entirely. For all of her twenty-three years, Jerry had been as the rest of the familiar landscape of Hornitos, Mariposa County, California, dirt—necessary but not engrossing.

Her name was Priscilla Dorothea Armstrong, wished on her by her sedate New Hampshire mother, at a time when she was in no condition to argue. For six years that mother had shielded her tender flower from the roughness of a California stock and mining community, from even the burly heartiness of the baby's father. Then she had died as composedly as she had lived, and Miss Priscilla emerged, to take life into her own hands. She liked it finely. She liked the way it smelled and tasted and sounded, and, be it noted, the smells and taste and sounds of a western cattle ranch have nothing to do with a violet bed. In a week she was sitting on the edge of the corral and giggling with ecstasy, while they branded the calves —anything but a giggling sight, by the way. Within a month she was straddling her own broncho hanging on by tooth and nail, her knee grip being somewhat inadequate, and trying to throw her own lariat.

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Her conversational style was already appalling; her mother would have somersaulted in her grave had she heard it.

Then she settled the matter of her name. Jerry was the offender, her first goat, as he was like to be her last. He was the foreman's son, two years older than herself, and an imp of darkness. At first he resented this female intruder on the ranch society. Then, bowed to reluctant admiration of her pep, he decided to endure, but first to chasten her. His campaign began with a spirited chanting of her name, delivered at times when her ambitions were taking a most virile turn, when she was clamoring to assist at a pig-sticking, or was being extracted by the legs from under the barn where she had cornered a skunk. His manner was odious. Miss Armstrong heard him through thrice, squared about with a belligerent eye, and hurled herself upon his amazed and non-resistant form. He went over in a heap to the joy of the assembled cowboys, and Priscilla Dorothea promptly buried her teeth in his nose. It took the drastic efforts of her father, the Chinese cook and the blacksmith, to remove her, fighting like a little fiend. From that day the name was obliterated. They christened her "The Little Maverick"—Ricky for short. A maverick is a beast of wild, unbranded character, running a lone range, knowing no master. The term, applied at first in affectionate derision, proved to fit her like a skin. Unbranded, unbroken, she certainly was. The adored darling of the Bobcat Ranch, she held her admirers by no feminine wiles, but by reckless superiority at their own game. Her father she treated as a pal, cussing or ragging him, or working for him like a dozen boys, but never in all her whooping young days kissing him, nor paying him the slightest deference. She claimed all masculine rights and then some. By the time she was thirteen she had tried to get drunk, and having succeeded beyond her wildest expectations, had vehemently climbed the water-wagon for keeps. She passed up tobacco chewing for the same sufficient reason. But with these slight exceptions she was one of the boys.

Which would have been idyllic had she not insisted on growing. Baby dimples and curls went—woman dimples and curls came, which are far from the same proposition. Father-like, big Bill Armstrong was oblivious to this until her sixteenth year. His enlightenment came suddenly. He rounded the ranch house veranda one morning just in time to see Jerry sprawl headlong down the steps at the point of his daughter's hobnailed boot, and to hear said daughter deliver herself of conversation that for fire and descriptive adjectives had the most kiln-dried broncho buster on the range backed into the mesquite. When her father tried to arbitrate for Jerry, who it seemed had merely attempted to kiss her, she aimed her vocabulary at him—and the worm turned. He bellowed at her to sit down, and gasping, she sat while he surveyed her. Fire-cheeked, green-eyed and spitting like a cat, but nevertheless a woman, mature and exquisite, his daughter burst upon his vision. Billy Armstrong groaned and readjusted himself. The result was that, begging vainly for the first time in her life, she was bundled off to a young ladies' finishing school in San Francisco, there to be roped, branded and halter-broken.

Gloom descended on Bobcat Ranch, but not on Ricky the maverick. Nor did that roping, branding and halter-breaking program come off as per order. She took to school with ominous joy, and within a month was raising more original kinds of hell that had ever been dreamt of in San Francisco. When she put the raw oysters in the principal's bed, she left hurriedly, but only temporarily, her father's money being a potent apology. After that she learned to be more discreet in her methods. No one knew for months that she had taught the mouselike little daughter of the Episcopal bishop to play poker, and swear like a sheep herder. And when the pimply pride of the millionaire house of McIntyre attempted to elope with the Japanese gardener, Miss Armstrong's enthusiastic labors for that end were carefully hidden. So she passed four hilarious years, and wound up in a burst of conventional splendor, her fairy-like

face witching over chiffon draperies, a string of pearls that had cost her dad a herd, and a bunch of orchids that meant Jerry's hide, soul and grin.

So, at twenty, the little maverick came back to the Bobcat Ranch, with the newest slang, a Mary Pickford waistline and curls, but conspicuously ropeless and brandless. And Jerry, grinning and yearning, entered hopeless slavery. At twenty-one she voted, celebrating the occasion with a secretly staged slugging match between "Bad Tony" Salvatore and "Red Mike" Monogan. This affair she cheered to its writhing, slavering finish, thumping Jerry on the knee with an excited pink fist, and digging her father's ribs with an appreciative elbow. Which spoke volumes for the refining influence of Miss Smyth's Seminary.

Having entered her majority she came to business terms with her father, being incited thereto by Jerry's financial independence. Jerry had owned his first calf when he was ten. At eighteen he had a respectable little herd; at twenty was in business for himself, with his own brand and five hundred head that he herded from one range of rented pasturage to another. At twenty-three he was on the high road to prosperity; the war had come on, beef had gone booming, steers brought $100 on the hoof, where they once brought ten. Jerry whistled gaily when he rode the range. His whistling was not so chipper around the ranch house, for Ricky kept him in the soggy depths of despair, or on the equally disquieting heights of hope. His feelings were therefore mixed, when after talking business with dad she strolled out to make him a proposition.

Jerry was sitting on the ground, braiding a whip with the aid of three dogs, a tailless rooster, and 3,459 flies. Ricky sprawled beside him.

"Jerry, I want to buy in," she announced.

"Buy in—whaju mean?" he grunted.

"Buy into your herd—go in business with you, bone head," she said with a contemptuous glare.

Jerry's whip and jaw dropped from sheer amazement. Ricky, a beloved dream, was one thing. Ricky as running mate on a man's job was quite another. Love and discretion struggled in his heart. He remembered the incident of the bitten nose, and other incidents equally harrowing. Discretion won.

"Well, you ain't going to," he decided flatly.

Ricky bounced to her knees from her leisurely stomach sprawl; wads of tarweed trembled indignantly on her costume, hot wrath darted from her face.

"I ain't, ain't I? Well, I am so, you Jerry Malone," she hotly retorted.

"You ain't neither. What do you want to come buttin' in on my job for?" Jerry was growing heated himself.

"I'm coming because I want to go into business, and Dad's given me $10,000," she replied, with a superiority she vainly hoped would crush him.

"Well, go into your own business then and leave mine alone."

"But I want to go into business with *you*. I don't want to ride herd alone an' you know I don't. I wouldn't be such an old pig—" Then suddenly her temper bubbled into a giggle. Dropping on her stomach again she peered up at him through her curly tousle. "Aw, Jerry—let's!"

Jerry groaned and damned lustily. Her wrath he could combat, but he was wax before that giggle, and well she knew it.

So began that memorable partnership, now of two years' duration. She had doubled his herd, though insisting on using her own brand. Night and day that first year Ricky worked beside him, riding as fast and as hard as he, laughing, singing, swearing, teasing, or hotly contesting various business arrangements. Her dad, adoring, watched her with delight, and gave her her way in everything. Jerry, adoring, watched her with well-grounded suspicions, and balked her in everything possible. They had an uproarious good time. In June, with three cowboys, they drove their herd from the thinning grass of the hot lower foothills to the lush Sierro meadows. Jerry never will forget that ride. All day they rode, leaving behind the tar weed, "Chimise" brush and

scrub oak, working higher into the bull pines and manzanitas of the chowchillas. At night they camped by the road, their campfire a scarlet dot in the looming mountain immensities, the cattle milling slowly around them, nervous, distrustful. They slept in their riding clothes, Ricky sleepily jeering at him from the other side of the camp fire, until they were both asleep. Sometimes his sleep was only a pretense, for Jerry's heart was breasting new ranges along with his thundering herd. Ricky, the imp, was no longer walled from him by the customs of a lifetime. Near and alone they entered the wilderness. Freedom and love pounded in Jerry's veins.

They made summer camp in the deep greenness of the mountains, beside a perfect trout stream. For a week they fished and hunted—played like babies—dreamed beside their camp fire, the man with something warmer than flame creeping into his eyes, the girl softly silent. Something was happening to Ricky, too, a quietness, a taking of counsel with herself. No longer would she bunk with the gang in the old pal way, but at the crumbling of the fire would roll off by herself in her blankets, with never a good-night taunt. Jerry, watching, reining himself in desperately, began to hope. Then suddenly, at the end of the week, she flung herself in the saddle, announced she was going, and went, leaving the astounded Jerry one last disconcerting vision of a flushed and teasing face, from the nose of which five rosy fingers were extended in derision and farewell.

They recommenced operations in the fall on a constrained basis, which soon eased, however, to the old camaraderie. But Ricky never explained the sudden decamping of the summer, would go on no more long trips at night, and was given to disconcerting words of gentle shyness. Such hints of feminity would have been most encouraging in any other female. But Jerry, sensitive and proud behind his grin, had had his lesson; he knew better than to hope again; and he put aside the gnawing pain within him, as a thing for man's contempt.

Financially the firm of Armstrong and Malone had flourished. So prosperous, indeed, was Miss Armstrong, that two months before the opening of this tale, she had flung reason to the winds, bonded a long deserted mine, and set to work to re-open and develop it. From a stockman's viewpoint this was utter madness. Mariposa county is primarily a mining territory. The people in it are divided rigidly into two classes, those who believe in mining and those who tee-to-tally do *not*. To the latter class belong all the cattlemen. Unique in their ranks was Ricky. She was moved to mine, not so much because that particular game fascinated her, as because she was constitutionally averse to passing up any game. Her father gesticulated, damned and washed his hands of her. Jerry argued, quarreled, and secretly watched her every move. And Ricky sat on the hotel veranda, lured the western beef drummer to his doom, and watched Luigi Castanetto's sixteen-horse team pulling in her new hoist.

Jerry, outwardly mirthful, inwardly wrestled with anxiety. He was not narrowly prejudiced in his opinion that her mining venture was rank foolishness. Mining and cattle raising are totally different jobs. In the cattle business every cowboy on the range had known Ricky since she was a baby; her only problems were work and loneliness, her world a place of great skies, clean winds and a friendly trail. But in mining she worked not with friends but with suspicious strangers, imported foreigners mostly, men of brute bodies and toil-shrivelled brains. Her only guide was her wily foreman, Jo Diaz, a yellow-bellied snake, if Jerry had ever seen one, and her world a haunt of slimy darkness, foul air and choking runways. Moreover, mining, hard at any time, was in a wicked mix just then. It was April, 1917; war had recently been declared, the I. W. W. had started trouble, and their delegates were working along the Mother Lode, leaving a trail of dissatisfaction and strikes. Nothing had happened in Hornitos yet. But it "weren't no business to break into just then, damned if it was." Wherefore Jerry watched and worried.

His anxieties did not touch Miss Ricky in the least. This was "some game"—had stock raising lashed to the mast. While Jerry meditated she was standing under the "gallows frame," watching the disposal of the new hoist. Hoists, gallows frames, skips and compressors had been Greek to her until this year, but now she accepted them as a matter of course. The trick was obviously to turn rock into money. If she could turn hoofs and hides into money, why not rock? She gave a wriggle of satisfaction at the way she was getting onto her job, and dug gleefully at Manuel Silva's small boy, who clung to her side. Little Tony, aged five, round and brown, with merry, shoe-button eyes, was her latest pal, the fruit of those strange new moods. Hitherto she had regarded children as unpleasant, but necessary, vermin. But lately she displayed a playful tenderness toward them, wiped their noses with a brisk hand, armed herself with "all-day-suckers," against their wants, and went about her work with Tony's grimy little paw clutching her.

The work went swimmingly. Two shifts of Austrians, brought down from Calaveras county, opened the old shaft in record time. Once opened there, as per report, at the bottom of the two hundred fifty foot shaft, was a ten foot face of $7.00 ore. Not very high grade ore, and not worth working in the old days of inadequate machines and prohibitive prices. But now, with electricity to run the modern pumps and hoists, compressors, drills and air pipes, it was a different story. Now she could make it pay, even if it did have to be custom milled for a while. So she gravely planned with Foreman Diaz, and inwardly capered with glee.

A month went by. The profits were piling up, and Ricky was assuming such an air of intense wisdom that it was difficult to converse with her. Meanwhile Jerry, watching, learned things. He met her that evening as she came swinging home, her flannel shirt spattered with mud and candle wax. At sight of him, a provoking smirk appeared upon her face, for Jerry in his recent role of "nursie" was in her black books. With a mocking salute she passed him Jerry disregarded the taunt.

"Hi, there, Ricky—want to talk to you," he yelled.

Ricky stopped impatiently, as befitted a woman of affairs. "Well?" she demanded.

"*Well* nothin'—there's hell poppin'," said Jerry. "See here, Ricky, you've got to cut out this mining for the present."

"Cut out my mine! Well, I like your nerve!"

"I don't care whether you like it or not. Don't be a fool, Rick. You know the trouble there's been at all the other mines. Well, it's coming here. There's an I. W. W. loafin' around, and he's been talking to your men. They're going to strike, an' if you don't give in they'll flood the mine for you. I tell you you've got to quit," and Jerry's jaw clicked in a way that should have warned his lady partner.

Being warned, however, was not that young person's strong suit. She promptly snickered insultingly and lisped:

"Tum an' spit it out in mama's hand!"

Jerry glared until his eyes popped. With all the warmth of his ardent manhood he longed to slap her, slap her hard. But for considerations, as discreet as they were chivalrous, he desisted. So he merely remarked in a badly restrained bellow:

"Well, hop to it then. And I hope you get yours, Priscilla Doroth-ee-a Armstrong," the latter being delivered at a rapid gallop.

Now, despite her flippant replies, Ricky was anything but at ease. For three days she had been noticing strange things among the men—grumblings, secret conversations, an air of lowering constraint. Even the manners of the hitherto fawning Mr. Diaz seemed to be slipping into something that bordered on defiant impudence. It wasn't in Ricky's wind-swept soul to be afraid. But the sense of danger watching, hiding, made her cattily alert.

She ate her supper in unusual silence, even ignoring her dad's friendly attempts at a row. Ricky was meditating, and it was hard work. Every vibration of her tense instincts told her she was up against it. She had never faced indignity or mutiny. That this was due fully as much to her father's money and position as to

her own power never entered her head. Nor did she dream of that fundamental contemptuous distrust of women workers that lies in men, be they residents of a suffrage state or not.

She could not sleep and at eleven started for the mine. She had never been there during the night shift, but decided it was time to begin. Passing Manuel Silva's house she heard sounds of drunken brawling, the feeble protests of Mrs. Silva and baby Tony's cry, as he was slapped. Then the door flew open and the sobbing little chap came tumbling out. Ricky caught him up, her throat tight with rage. She knew better than to interfere in a Portugese family quarrel, but she could have drawn and quartered Manuel.

"There, Tony, old scout, don't you cry —Ricky's got you," she crooned, hugging him close. "Tony want to go mine with Ricky? Want to go down big hole?"

Tony assuredly did. He continued a diplomatic amount of intermittent howling, but his soul was off on the new adventure.

The mine was a strange thing at night —disconcertingly unfamiliar: a core of shadow-shot light, fitful, hectic, encircling and overwhelming it; darkness, haunted with sinister shapes; skeleton forms that flung themselves, racked, against the sky; tenuous things that threaded the air like monstrous evil webs; hunched masses, crushing; and noises, sighs and gusts and mouldy-damp, that did not come by day. Watching outside the circle of light, with a cautious hand hushing small Tony, Ricky tingled to the strangeness, seeing it as an evil background for something more vitally malicious. The men, who should have been working, were grouped by the gallows frame, listening. A stranger was addressing them, a stranger with a bulbous, pale head, unusually flat as to back. His flesh was unwholesomely blonde, his figure lumpy, inflexible. But his eyes were of a peculiar hard light blue, fiery, intent, focussing tremendous power. His voice was harsh, but his words were evidently honey dew to his audience. Ricky caught broken bits—"riting in audomopeles, Gott tamn dem"—"backbone of the nation"—rice and Demant Rigdts!" It seemed ridiculous to her, quite like a vaudeville skit. She could see herself imitating him to her father's delight, and unconsciously she began to goggle her eyes and protrude her impish form in mimicry. The men were, if anything, funnier with their rolling eyes and villainous scowls. She was sure it needed but her resolute presence to dispel the whole melodrama. With her chin squared she entered the light—to receive the biggest jolt of her existence.

The men faced her blackly, with a stolidness that rapidly heated to sneering derision. As a woman she might have commanded their covetous admiration, but as a boss she had butted in on a man's job, and she could take what a man would get. The blonde gentleman regarded her with peculiar coldness. In his country women were females. Those doubting it were enlightened. He had recently assisted at a little market festivity in Liege, where some dozen Belgian ladies of aristocratic and advanced ideas were "enlightened" to their life-long remembrance. Five of them had thereafter killed themselves. He surveyed Ricky with a look that made her gag with rage.

"What do you mean by keeping my men from work?" she hotly demanded.

"Burhabs du men hab someding to say aboudt dot," he replied with a sneer.

Ricky lost her temper. Shrill with anger she shouted, "Get off my land you — — loafer, or I'll have you kicked off. And you men get back to your work poco pronto, or as sure as God made little apples I'll can the bunch of you."

Then, not waiting to see her orders obeyed, so certain was she of obedience, she called:

"You, Sidro, get to your hoist. I'm going down. I want to see what those damn bums have done since they came on. You men can come on the next load."

Picking up Tony she climbed into the skip. For an instant Isidro hesitated, then, at a look from the German, stepped to the hoist, reversed the lever, and the skip slowly slipped out of sight, the candles in their caps flickering until they melted into the darkness.

For a few seconds the men stood shuffling, uncertain. Then the I. W. W. delegate took up his harangue again, with added haste and heat. It did not take long to win his point. The men were flicked in the raw, savage at the woman who had dared to jump them. For five minutes he talked; then one by one they reached for their lunch buckets and slouched into the night, muttering. Old Alberti was last. Ricky had nursed his wife, paid his rent, given him the plugcut he was chewing. He stood uncertain, his hand on the bell signal. But the agitator stood beside him, and in an instant his face was scarred with rage. "Damn her," he growled, "let her stay there for a while and get a little scared; it'll do her good. She'll climb out on the ladder fast enough when the water begins to rise, and she finds the hoist won't work." He pulled the switch, cut off the power, and the pump stopped.

She had gone clear to the bottom of the shaft, the three-hundred-foot level, from which a new drift swung to the south for some hundred feet. At the end of this drift the night shift should have been working. Toward it she and Tony groped their way in the scanty candle light. Her temper was mending. She was confident that she had settled the matter, and rather elated. She chatted gaily with Tony, lifting his reluctant plumpness from the puddles. It was very wet. This drift lay two hundred feet below normal water level, and it took incessant pumping from the twenty foot sump at the bottom of the shaft to keep the water under control.

Arrived at the end of the drift she importantly inspected the face. As a matter of fact Ricky's inspection was nine-tenths bluff. She could have diagnosed any cattle disease known, but her mining knowledge was far from being exhaustive. However, she poked and scrambled with gusto, aided by the overjoyed Tony. Tony was having great fun paddling. Never in his experience had the drift been so beautifully wet. Ever as he squealed and splashed it grew wetter. At first Ricky, deep in mineralogy, did not notice. Then she began to look for the men who were strangely slow in coming. Fifteen minutes—they ought to be down. Well, probably they were talking off their grouch; she'd give them a little time. Squatting high on a pile of rock she invited Tony to come and hear a fairy tale. Tony heard her absently. Being nearer the floor he was concerned with something more fascinating than fairy tales. Noting his absorption, Ricky scrambled down and scrambling—screamed. The water was over Tony's shoe tops, and a rising flood stretched into the darkness! Frantically she grabbed the signal rope, and rang for the hoist. Then catching up Tony she ran for the skip-station. There was no sound, no swinging clank of pump, no whirr of descending skip. Darkness above and around, and through the darkness the lipping rise of water. Again and again she rang. Then fearing to wait she lifted Tony.

"Come, let's pig-a-back, Tony, up on Ricky's shoulder." Squealing with delight the little fellow wriggled to position, and Ricky began to climb. Now Ricky of the big heart and haughty tongue was tiny as to body, and Tony was a twisting chunk. Straight up through the grim darkness of the seventy per cent shaft the ladder stretched, coated with slime, every rung a possible death. Behind came the water, falling, reaching, softly, swiftly. The first thirty feet were possible. Then her heart rocked. Fear was on Ricky at last, strangling fear, as slowly she rose, grasping Tony's plump leg with one hand, pulling herself up the treacherous ladder with the other. Fear in her brain and bones, but fighting cheer in her voice.

"Up we go, sonny, hold on tight. Sit still, Tony; be good-piggy-boy." Tony kicked and gurgled. Ricky gasped in torture, clung to the ladder, pressing her cracking head against the cool slime—clung half conscious until the memory of the water stung her to horrified haste. Up past the abandoned two-hundred-foot station, with its filled-in drift, nearer she crept to the hundred-fifty-foot level. Alone she would have scrambled out like a cat. But now, with the weight of Tony's body dragging her, and the fear of his death numbing her, every step was

agony. At last the hundred-fifty-foot station! Steadying herself on the station she paused, and Tony saw his chance. Enough of pig-a-backing for the present—the puddles for his! With a delighted whoop he cast himself from Ricky's shoulder, skidded over the slippery platform and plunged headlong down the shaft, just as Ricky, shrieking, threw herself after him. His trousers caught in her clutching fingers, ripped but held; and Tony, blubbering, scrambled back to safety. Ricky lay flat in the darkness, her candle out, as was Tony's. There was darkness in her brain, as in her eyes, a darkness and a growing agony. She felt Tony's fat hands, jerking, tried to rise, clawed and struggled, and with a gasping moan collapsed. Something was broken somewhere—pain swept her. Unconsciousness came near, but she fought it, whimpering, talking through chattering teeth.

"Tony, listen—Ricky tell story 'bout—fairies—damn fine—fairies—" Her voice broke, then marched bravely on. Below the water heaved—rose—clutched—

JERRY took another turn in front of the ranch house, stubbed his toes, and swore like a trooper. He was sleepy, tired, mad. Six A. M., and the little fool not home yet. Probably gabbing with the men. If he, Jerry, was anything but a rotten idiot he'd go home and forget her. Being a rotten idiot he might as well have a look at the mine, and see what was up. Half a mile took him to his look. Then he began to run.

Not a man to be seen, machinery all stopped, no answer to his call—nothing. Yes, at the mouth of the shaft, something—Tony's Teddy bear, mangy companion of all his wanderings. Things went dead for Jerry at that. Very carefully he lifted the bear, ran his fingers slowly around his collar, deliberatly spat—and began to jar from head to foot with that racking convulsion that comes to a man instead of tears. But he also began to climb frantically down the shaft. So climbing, he came to a huddled heap, a finished fairy tale and a small boy, who paddled in water that seeped over the platform's edge.

"Ricky—Ricky, old girl," groaned Jerry, lifting the little body in his arms, pride and caution forgotten, all his great love naked raw in his breaking voice.

"Ricky sleep," commented Tony, trying to poke her eyes open with a business-like finger.

But Ricky was not asleep. A tired smile fluttered over her face, and a faint voice whispered, "Jerry—" before she fainted away.

Jerry never remembered quite how he got them up and back to a ranch filled with crazed men. One picture alone holds—a big Billy Armstrong facing him, hands on his shoulders, trying to speak, but sweating and shaking as if with ague. There was a grisly hour of waiting for the doctor's decision, an hour only slightly mitigated by the sight of the fluent German being ridden past on a rail, stripped of clothes, but amply provided with a coat of tar and feathers. Which was only the beginning of what befell him before the sheriff rescued a whining, quivering thing from a mob that foamed and barked in bestial hunger at his heels.

But at last the doctor came out. Shock and a knee cap twisted, from torn ligaments. She'd wear a cast for a while, but he'd bet it wouldn't faze her, plucky little devil. They let Jerry in to see her alone. She seemed unbelievably tiny, and white. He knew neither what to do nor say. He looked away, opening and closing his clumsy hands. A minute went like eternity. There was the shadow of an impish giggle.

"Sorry you did it, Jerry Malone?"

"Sorry! Me? God! And me loving—"

He had said it at last. He dared not look—prayed for an engulfing miracle. Then, the faintest whisper, shy but gleeful—

"Aw! Then—let's—old Jerry."

He could not believe—but in a panic lest it be a mistake, he found her lips, and for a little while went mad with joy.

Finally, calmed and sure, he grinned at her dolefully. "Well, I suppose I'm in for a hell of a life now," said Jerry

"You damn sure are," whispered Ricky, and kissed him under the ear.

TO VIOLETS, $100

By RAMSEY BENSON

Among commuters, a man is known by the train he takes. Bilby "goes in" late and "comes out" early; but one night Bilby is off his schedule, and a little thing like taking a later train and getting off at the wrong station changes his whole life.

HEN the newspapers and others speak of Newport as a colony, they use the term in a sense peculiar to the connection; and while Blithedale doesn't pretend as yet to be another Newport, nevertheless it is that kind of colony and going strong. Every man knows that when you buy land within its precincts you bind yourself to spend for permanent improvements a sum so far from trifling that, unless you are rippingly rich, you simply haven't it to spend, and, what is more, your social quality has to test as high as a yesterlaid egg. If you are the least bit off color you stay out, no matter how wealthy you may be. Tom, Dick and Harry simply cannot get to live in Blithedale.

Bilby lived there. He did business in town, but his home was in Blithedale. He had the coin and the quality. Personally he put on no airs; still, he usually took the 5:23 out. It was part of the colonial character to go early and avoid the rush of cheap clerks who gorged the 5:47, and Bilby had the habit. To fall in with the fashion of his kind was to pursue the line of least resistance.

Once upon a time, however, something threw him off his schedule and he missed the 5:23 by about a second and a half. He made no fuss. He hadn't the demonstrative way with him anyhow, and a man who could see a hundred thousand vanish in a slump of stocks and never bat a lash wasn't likely to be greatly ruffled because he had missed a train. He had twenty minutes to kill and he killed them quietly and comfortably, strolling about, smoking, studying the fronts of the periodicals strung up over the news stand or regarding the traveling public as it passed by. After awhile the cheap clerks began to arrive and crowd about the iron gates to the train shed. Bilby regarded them. They carried all sorts of burdens. One fellow had a lawn mower with the handle off, another the tire of a cheap car, still another a collection of hoes and rakes. When at length, after considerable scuffling for place, Bilby found himself aboard the train, he shared his seat with a young man whose burden was a sheaf of pine weather strips.

"Going to set up a lumber yard?" Bilby asked him, in a joking way.

The boy, for he was scarcely more, laughed joyously. "Sure looks like it," he admitted. "Our shack sprung a leak all over the roof last night. Fierce! Had to pipe all hands to quarters to man the pumps and still the water gained on us. I've an idea these weather strips will help some if I can get them nailed on right."

"Where do you live?" Bilby inquired.

"Sandhurst," the boy replied.

Sandhurst was the next station beyond Blithedale and not a colony in the restricted sense.

"Family?"

"Three babies, and the wife."

"Employed in town?"

"I work for the Fidelity Warehouses."

The Fidelity Warehouses belonged to Bilby, though he was seldom about them. He couldn't recall the boy's face. Evidently a subordinate whose pay couldn't be more than $100 a month, probably not so much.

"Lumber's pretty high," remarked Bilby.

"Lord, yes! A dollar just for these few splinters." The boy's eyes danced.

"It doesn't seem to hurt your feelings."

"Me? No! What's the use? I might get peeved, but the price of the lumber would still be a dollar."

"How does a man with a moderate income make the both ends meet these days?"

"You can search me!"

"Perhaps they don't always meet."

"That's more like it; they just come near enough to holler at each other and let it go at that."

The boy bubbled over with laughter and Bilby caught the infection in a mild form. His face softened. "Don't you ever get tired of the grind?" he asked.

"Well, yes. I'm pretty tired at night. But a fellow likes to be tired at night."

"Not in the morning?"

"No. I used to be tired in the morning, but not any more. When I get up in the morning now I feel as if I could fight wildcats."

"Why the difference?"

"Dunno—unless it's corn bread three times a day."

"Corn bread?"

"Yep; we can't afford wheat bread any more and I never felt so well in my life. Oh, we're learning a few things at our house—about what's fun and what we only think is fun. Last winter we couldn't spare the money for double windows and storm doors and we had to pinch the stove down to the limit to make the coal last through. We expected to freeze, but we didn't, and it's so long since we've had a cold in the family we don't know what it's like except by hearsay."

Every station thinned the swarm and presently there were seats in plenty. Bilby made his way forward to the smoker and lighted a cigar. He sat by the window and stared out at the flitting landscape and smoked and thought.

Then a funny thing happened. He thought or dreamed so intently that he forgot to get off at Blithedale. The train made the stop and was well under way again when the conductor discovered Bilby still in his seat.

The conveniences of ripping rich patrons wasn't likely to be overlooked by the obliging, not to say obsequious, functionary. He promptly reached for the cord that set the brakes. "We've passed Blithedale, sir," quoth he, suavely.

Bilby was surprised, but not in the least dismayed. He stayed the conductor's hand with a gesture of his own. "Never mind—don't stop for me. I'll go on to Sandhurst and walk back. I'm in no hurry."

He got off at Sandhurst and a crowd of cheap fellows with him. The station was a barnlike structure, built of wood and shabbily painted, in sharp contrast with the elegant pile of ashlar stone and ornamental tiling which served the convenience of Blithedale's comers and goers. Children and dogs were waiting, a numerous and noisy crew, and they thronged about the train to seize upon the fellows as they alighted and go trooping off with them. Every fellow, it appeared, had children to meet him, with a plentiful measure of dogs thrown in to swell the tumult of welcome.

Bilby's clerk was conspicuous by reason of his sheaf of weather strips. Two bright little girls danced about him ecstatically and a rusty brown spaniel barked vociferous greeting. Bilby watched them until they turned into a little place where a woman stood at the gate with an infant in her arms. A very modest place, a shack indeed, with cracks between its rough boards and a roof of cheap paper. It would be hard to find in Blithedale a garage that hadn't cost ten times as much.

A crude parkway formed the backbone of Sandhurst's system of streets. Bilby strolled along it at an easy pace and when it came to an end he struck into the primeval forest. Here nature undefiled lay all about him. Birds sang, woodsy blossoms lifted up their faces to kiss his hand as he brushed by; the air was cool and sweet and spicy with the smell of growing things.

Just a word about those woods. They belonged to Blithedale. They were left there purposely, though the land was enormously valuable. With their two miles of deep wilderness they formed a barrier against the invasion of cheap and common things—against Sandhurst particularly, where almost nobody could afford a house as costly as a Blithedale garage. Sand-

hurst might run its crude parkway to the verge of the woods, but not an inch beyond.

The footpath through the forest, though not a thoroughfare, was well beaten; evidently a good many feet had trod it first and last. Bilby met two persons—a laborer who touched his hat deferentially and a coarse and heavy woman carrying a basket nearly as large as herself. The woman stared at him intently and as they were about to pass she set her basket down right in the path so that he had no choice but to halt.

"Ay tank you ban Meester Beelby," she said, with a strong foreign accent.

Bilby surveyed her impassively, without a word.

"Ay ban wash for Mees Beelby," the woman went on, unabashed. "Ay ban find dees in Mees Beelby's Balkum yacket."

She held out a scrap of crumpled paper. He hesitated but took it from her hand after a moment and glanced at it. It was a florist's bill, in these words:

"Mrs. Bilby, Dr. To violets, $100. Paid."

"What's this to you?" inquired Bilby, crustily.

The woman's eyes filled with tears. "She pay heem—she not pay me. Ay ban vash for year—more too. She not pay me yet. Ay haf noddings only I vork for heem. Ay ban poor."

Bilby folded up the paper and thrust it in his pocket. "I'll keep it—it's no business of yours."

"You vill pay me?"

He didn't answer. He didn't vouchsafe the woman so much as another look further, but strolled on, easily and unhurriedly. She watched him with quivering lips until he was lost to sight among the trees, then with a sigh that was like a sob she picked up her big basket and went her way.

At the edge of the woods Bilby came out upon a splendid macadam road, glistening like a satin ribbon in the sunlight. Before him, in all its matchless loveliness, lay the particular star of Blithedale's diadem—the lake, famous far and wide, for all men had heard of it though so few were permitted to enjoy its charms. It was a sight to make an artist gasp for breath and break forth in raptures.

Billy paused. At his feet, just over the granite parapet of the roadway was the bathing beach. A gay party was gathered there, as gay in its way as the children and dogs of Sandhurst. Conspicuously, a slim girl just then emerged from the water and threw herself down on the sand beside a burly youth with bare arms and legs.

Incidentally she caught sight of the figure by the parapet above them. "Co-oo! Papa!" she cried, and waved her hand.

Bilby waved back, but his face didn't light up.

No colonist in Blithedale had contented himself with spending for improvements the bare sum nominated in the bond, pretty penny though it should be, yet few the colonists who had spent so much as Bilby. The parking of his lawn alone had cost a king's ransom and no king need be ashamed to call that work of art his own. Yet Bilby strolled through it to-day with his head down, seeing nothing of its glory. The grass was like a carpet under his feet and the ground might have been overlaid with real velvet at less expense, but he trod it as indifferently as he had trod Sandhurst's coarse and common weeds.

The mansion, in kingly keeping with its environments, had its deep massive porch, and a cool breeze stole gently through it as Bilby sat down. He took off his hat and ran his fingers through his damp hair, drawing deep breaths of the balmy air.

To him, there, Mrs. Bilby fluttered out, a fluffy vision of contentment, whom merely to behold was refreshing. Only Bilby gave no sign of being refreshed by it; rather the contrary. If a glint of satisfaction had come into his eyes in answer to the wind's caress it went dull at the woman's approach.

"Why, Horace, dear!" she exclaimed. "I was wondering if you could have missed both trains. Where have you been, dear?"

"They carried me by, and I walked back from Sandhurst," he replied.

"You should have sent for the car. You have tired yourself all out. It is so warm and you're not used to walking. You won't be fit to enjoy Meg's musical."

"I didn't know Meg was going to have a musical."

"Neither did any of us, till this morning. We wired in for twenty players from the Symphony. We were afraid we mightn't be able to get them on such short notice, but they came. They brought that new harpist with them, everybody is crazy about her and she has never played at a private musical before. We're the first to have her."

Bilby offered no comment. He didn't look annoyed by any means, but neither did he quiver with delight.

"Followed by dancing, of course," prattled Mrs. Bilby. "Meg wanted something more formal for the last night of her house party, something dressier, you know. One tires of flannel, even in summer."

She drew up a chair and sat down and rocked placidly, beaming out at the fair prospect. The regal park had charms for her at least. She looked upon it and glowed.

She didn't say anything further, though. Neither did Bilby. After awhile a servant came to ask about some detail of domestic administration. "Excuse me, Horace, dear!" chirped the mistress of the house and left its master to himself.

Bilby sat where he was till the sound of of gay voices warned him that the young people were coming up from the beach. Another servant passed at the moment. "Tell Mrs. Bilby I don't care for dinner," he directed the maid and sauntered away to watch the sun go down beyond the lake. The sun interested him. It went down with a flare and a flame and Bilby watched it until its brilliance faded out and night fell.

It was past eight o'clock when he sauntered back. The first person he met was his wife, in stately array. She had been looking for him. "Horace, dear, aren't you going to dress?" she inquired.

"I am dressed," Bilby answered.

She gave him an uncertain glance. "Are you tired, dear?"

"Not especially."

"Your long walk from Sandhurst—"

"The walk did me good. I'm glad they carried me by."

Mrs. Bilby turned away without another word. Bilby found himself a chair back among the shadows of the porch and was seen no more. If he chose to be singular in tweed and tan where everybody else wore purple and fine linen, at any rate he had the grace not to obtrude himself. Presently the band tuned up and began to play and the company gathered about to listen or to chatter and make merry as the fancy took them, but none of them saw Bilby. At frequent intervals servants brought food and iced drinks, but even they didn't discover the master of the house, back among the shadows.

When the musical had lasted about an hour the band struck up a lively air and the dance began. From that moment a riot of gayety reigned throughout the house.

The young folks were reluctant to stop. Almost it was no sleep till morn with youth and pleasure so met, but Bilby sat it out. Now and then some straying pair, attracted by the restful shadows, loitered near him. Once it was Meg with some fellow he had never seen before and they were so near he might have overheard what they were saying had he cared to listen. Seemingly he didn't care. Seemingly his thoughts occupied him and he sat and sat till the last of the merry laughter was hushed and the guests, tired out at length with the strenuous gayety, had gone to their rest. Then he sought his wife.

She was in her room brushing her hair. Mrs. Bilby's maids were many, but she trusted the care of her hair to none of them. "I've something to say to you!" Bilby informed her, briefly but not harshly. His demeanor indeed was much more genial than it had been earlier in the evening.

The woman's spirits, on the other hand, had slumped visibly. "You've behaved like a bear tonight, Horace!" she retorted and she was cross about it, too.

Bilby laughed and she eyed him uneasily, for his manner was new to her. "Can't you put off your scolding till to-morrow? This is a pretty time of night—"

"Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day. By morning I might be out of the notion, and I might lose my nerve in the meanwhile."

More laughter, not exactly light and airy, but without a trace of bitterness. Mrs. Bilby was thoroughly at a loss and her perplexity didn't serve to sweeten her temper. "You certainly know how to be nasty when you choose!" she sniffled.

Her husband paid no attention to the taunt. He came nearer and took a strand of her hair in his hand. It was lovely hair. It shimmered under the light and the touch of it was like the touch of silk. "No silver threads yet!" he commented, with a gratified air.

She didn't answer. Bilby seated himself and rocked gently and gazed benignly up at her. It might have been a minute before either spoke. Then he asked her a question, two questions, in fact: "What's this Pentecost doing for you and me, Mildred? What are we letting it do for Meg?"

Her answer was a fretful sneer: "What Pentecost? You only make yourself absurd when you preach. Why try?"

He regarded her in silence, benignly, his mood in no wise responding to hers. Another minute or so, then Mrs. Bilby spoke once more, less fretfully, as if she would justify herself:

"I suppose you mean the war. I don't see what more can be expected of us. You gave $25,000 to the Red Cross and you took $50,000 worth of the Liberty Bonds. As for Meg and me, we are simply knitting our heads off. I never step out without my bag and Meg has just finished the loveliest sweater. If you had any appreciation of such things I should like to show it to you. Considering that it's her first I think it a wonder—especially the dainty way she has put on the silk facing down the front."

Bilby listened absently, and his air of indifference touched the raw. He took a scrap of paper out of his pocket and smoothed it flat on his knee.

"Are you trying to get on my nerves?" demanded his wife, flushing angrily.

He handed her the paper. "I met your washerwoman in the woods to-day, and she gave me this. She found it in your Balkan blouse. She tells me that you haven't paid her for more than a year."

Mrs. Bilby glanced at the paper and let it fall to the floor. She did not speak.

"You pay the florist and make the washerwoman wait," Bilby went on, his tone even and kindly, "not because she is less deserving, but because she can't help herself. You take an unjust and dishonest advantage of her—the same advantage a footpad takes of his defenceless victim."

A spark of resentment showed in Mrs. Bilby's face, but it passed at once and left her looking shocked and beaten and uncertain of herself.

"You had a conscience once, Mildred. What has become of it?"

The woman's lips fluttered, but they formed no word.

"What shall it avail Meg to knit sweaters for all the soldiers in France and be the kind of woman her mother has let herself become?

"We have done the things that we ought not to have done, and we have left undone the things we ought to have done, and the war is sent to correct our outlook—to purify it with the flame of sacrifice. We can't afford—you and I and Meg—we can't afford to stand aside and let the benefit pass by us. God knows we need it—nobody needs it more. There's a new heaven and a new earth coming to bless mankind. Because we are rich and have the material means to keep the pitiful trappings of the old order about us, shall we foolishly refuse to be blessed?"

Mrs. Bilby wept. With her head bowed and her splendid hair falling about her shoulders, she was like the figure of some repentant Magdalen out of an old picture. She shook with sobs.

Bilby came over and stooped down and kissed her. "No more now!" he said, a little huskily. "To-morrow we'll have another talk and make our plans. We'll see our way clearer then. Good night!"

With that he kissed her again and gave her hand a warm squeeze and went out.

It wasn't many days afterwards that the obsequious conductor, in conversation with his brakeman, ventured what was for him a bold and independent comment. "Old Bilby must be getting batty—he's gone by his station two nights running."

The brakeman was better informed.

"Didn't you know the old buck had moved?" he asked.

"Moved? No!"

"He has—Blithedale ain't his station any more. It's Sandhurst."

Whereupon you could have knocked the conductor over, by his own avowal, with a feather. "Sandhurst!" he repeated.

"Yes, you know that bungalow just north of the cut—the house that cheap skate built and couldn't pay for. Well, Bilby has bought it and moved in."

"The grand dame? And Meg?"

"They're up there too—I saw them this morning waving goodbye to Bilby when he left."

"What's the big idea? Old Bilby lost out somewhere?"

But the brakeman's information went no further. He didn't in the least know why the Bilbys had gone to live in Sandhurst and inasmuch as they had done so he didn't care. Neither did the conductor, once he was over his astonishment. It kept him busy considering the real people without going beyond the pale.

THREE STORIES FOR AUGUST

ZEKE *by Horace J. Simpson,* an amusing tale of an English town, of Zeke the bargeman and Sophie-Lizzie the bar-maid, being a complete and unexpurgated report of the incident of the £5 kiss. Readers who recall Mr. Simpson's story *The Epic of Old Cark* may look forward to the reading of a story equally as entertaining.

CARTER ROB ALSO RAN *by Louis Schneider.* A shiftless hill billie of the most pronounced type runs for sheriff, just to show his wife that his inertia is not chronic and that he can do something besides whittle soft pine sticks. He rides the district, soliciting the support of the sovereign voters and swapping various articles of personal property. He is a good trader, but a poor candidate; and although he is defeated in the primaries, there is still the question, "Gain or loss, and how much?" the answer to which effectively smothers a threatenened eruption of post mortem sarcasm and makes him a winner in the home stretch.

TRIBULATION AND CALAMITY *by Augustin W. Breeden,* an account by an eye witness of a stampede in the Ozark hills, in which law sharks and real estate pirates jostle one another in a mad race to stake out claims on the estate of the late, but not greatly lamented, Harmon Bradley. The grand prize, for men under thirty, is overlooked by all but the eye witness.

THE ROSE OF SHARON

By ARCHIBALD RUTLEDGE

Buck Saunders goes to collect on a rose bush, transplanted without his permission. While he is resting his rifle on the lower rail of a fence, waiting for his debtor to come out and get shot, somebody else breaks into the picture.

HEN he had reached the edge of the woods beyond the screen of which lay the clearing with Jefferson Wilkie's cabin standing in it, Buck Saunders crouched low in the undergrowth of mountain-laurel and huckleberry bushes; then, when he had come to the sagging rail fence, he lay flat on the ground and peered through the apertures between the chestnut rails. He put out his hand carefully to brush aside some tattered strips of rotting bark hanging down in front of his eyes. Gripped by his right hand was his long-barrelled squirrel-rifle. The heavy ounce-ball wadded home at the base of the barrel was Buck's calling card. He lay there waiting for a glimpse of Jeff in order to hand it to him.

From the fence to the cabin a narrow path led through an old field overgrown with sumac bushes and dewberry vines. Below the cabin were fields of growing crops; not indeed like the rich ones in the distant valley, but the best that the mountaineer could grow on this rocky, washed-out, North Carolina soil. On the high slope above the cabin a thrifty young apple orchard gave to the lonely clearing a touch of thrift and an air of modern efficiency. There were many gaudy flowers blooming beside the cabin, and morning-glory vines covered the back porch and the shed over the well.

After a few moments of surveying the general situation the visitor trained his rifle down the pathway leading to the cabin, giving its weight to a low fence-rail to support. He would play the waiting game. Being the best way to hunt animals, it was probably the best way to hunt man. He well knew that a movement of any kind would be the first thing to attract the keen eyesight of a man like Wilkie; so he lay still, letting his blue, vindictive eye play on the clearing and the home of the unsuspecting Jeff.

As he expected, his waiting was suddenly broken by a sound from the cabin. Buck gripped his rifle until the knuckles on his big brown hands were white. Was it Jeff, he wondered, waking from an afternoon nap, and now beginning to stir? If so, thought Buck, he would very soon put him to sleep again. Now that the evil deed he had contemplated was his to accomplish, Bucks' heart grew ominously calm with emotions of sweet vengeance. He thought of his Rose of Sharon, and he knew that the moment had come for him to avenge her. Indeed, as he looked for the appearance of his enemy, he seemed to see nothing but roses, roses; and their color was the color of blood.

He had the brass sight of his rifle squarely on the cabin door; and his finger was resting steadily but lightly on the hair-trigger of his weapon. The stern eye that glinted and gleamed along the barrel only waited for the form of Jeff to fill the door; then the end of it all would come. Buck did not doubt but that his enemy would appear. His wife, he reasoned, would be visiting her relatives in Chun's Cove at this time of year, and she would have taken Jeff's child with her. Because of his hatred of the whole Wilkie clan, Buck imagined that this hegira occurred oftener than it really did.

The momentary silence in the cabin was now followed by other noises. "Come on, you sucker!" Buck whispered to himself. Then brightly into his deadly aim came a

little calico dress. The child slipped on the threshold of the cabin and fell on the low step. She was not hurt. But she was surprised when she had not wanted to be, a thing which always irritates a woman. Her crying was the crying of fright rather than of pain. And she quaintly raised the hem of her little flowered frock to wipe her tears.

"Well, I'm damned!" Buck meant to express astonishment.

This was an exigency for which he had not prepared himself. The dress and the weeping and the tears moved him strangely. The little child now in his sight was not, indeed, his Rose of Sharon, but her ways made him think of her. He wondered where the mother was. He wondered where Jeff might be. Surely one or the other must be close by. In making up his mind to kill Jeff, Buck had somehow forgotten this baby girl.

"I reckon she might miss him pow'ful," he mused. "She'd think a lot of Jeff, wuthless as he is. Well, I'm damned!" Buck meant that he did not know what move to make next.

It was very strange that someone did not come to answer the child's crying. Had some one seen him coming, Buck wondered? Had anything happened to Jeff? For a moment Buck actually felt concerned over the welfare of his enemy. But his most definite feeling, and one that was increasing in intensity, was that if someone did not soon come to comfort the little girl, he would have to do it himself. It might be that she had hurt herself more than had at first seemed apparent. The crying was continuing. The tears were genuine. Something must be done. Buck was near enough to see the glint of a tiny teardrop as it coursed in the sunlight down the rosy cheek, to be lost in a disheveled curl.

"It ain't got no playmate," Buck mused again, much concerned. "I reckon it's pow'ful lonely when Jeff he's gone. Well, I'm damned!" he exclaimed softly. "I jest ain't a-gwine to stand that any longer."

Buck lifted himself from the ground, swung himself lithely over the fence, and walked up the path toward the cabin. The rifle in his hand was still cocked. It was ten years since he had been up this path; and if Jeff Wilkie saw him coming, he might easily understand (or misunderstand) the purpose of his approach.

The child did not see the mountaineer until his long shadow fell across the clay yard at her feet. Then she looked up quickly, her big eyes wet and shining. Her first expression, one of bright anticipation, changed to one of doubt and surprise. She had never before seen Buck Saunders. But he looked like many of the mountain figures with whom she was familiar. Her childish, determining glance was favorable; she smiled up at Buck.

"Where's your Ma, little un?" he asked, laying his great hand gently on her head. "Did you hurt yourself just now when you fell down the steps?"

"Ma, she is over the mounting in Chun's Cove," the child answered in her quaint drawl. "Pa," she went on, "is somewheres round, but he didn't make to come when I hurt myself. See, I hurt myself," she added confirmingly, lifting her skirt and showing Buck a notably slight abrasion on the dimpled brown knee.

"I see," he said in an all-conclusive answer. But he did not know what next to say. The child was not hurt, he reasoned; she had stopped crying. It would be better for him to be getting away from Jeff Wilkie's cabin.

"I waked up," his tiny companion now volunteered brightly, accounting, as Buck thought, for her being in the cabin alone. A subtle sense of honor kept him from asking where her father was. "And I is sleepy yet," she added, "and Pa he don't come home. You will have to sit in the big chair and rock me. That's what he does when I tell him to."

Something in the sweet tone, something in the dawning feminine note of coquettish assurance, something in the big brown eyes was to Buck Saunders the Rose of Sharon, his own little girl, now his no longer. What had long been his ruling passion—her wishes—now returned to master him.

"Sure and I'll rock you," he agreed. "Whar's the big chair you tell of?"

Delighted, the child climbed up into the

cabin, and running across the smooth pine floor, she sought to draw the heavy chair from the fireplace to the door. As Buck came to her assistance, she explained:

"I want it over there, where I can see the big mounting, and all the pretty birds and flowers outside the door. Ma and Pa, they allus rocks me there."

Nor would she have it any other way than that Buck should put the rocker by the open door; but he, constrained to be cautious, leaned his rifle up against the panel, and managed to keep the chair a little to one side of the door's opening.

When the child had nestled herself in his capacious arms, Buck began to rock back and forth slowly. He crooned a mournfully sweet melody of the mountains. It was one that had been a favorite in his own home before that home had become desolate. The child's eyeballs blinked heavily; and very soon they were sealed in sleep, deep, azure-lidded, innocent. Buck held her tenderly. His deep voice was now merely humming the sad tune. Once he thought of laying her down on the rude tumbled couch that he saw against the dark side of the cabin; but when he essayed to do so, the child stirred and complained in her dreams, and one tiny hand clutched his sleeve tightly. Buck again subsided into the depths of the old hickory rocker. It was a dangerous thing he was doing, but the lonely mountaineer found it sweet. Perhaps he would rather have killed Jeff Wilkie; but, next to that, he enjoyed rocking Jeff Wilkie's tiny daughter to sleep. He was as human as that.

As he rocked on slowly, his deep eyes swept the blue mountain-tops, and in particular one peak, crowned with its jutting gray rocks and plumed with its dusky hemlocks. He saw the white, dead chestnut trees, killed by lightning and by the hurricanes of winter, still gripping the gaunt rocks on the far height. Those were the chestnuts that he had climbed as a boy—and when his own little Rose had been a year old, he had taken her there, where they had gathered the last chestnuts that the old trees ever bore. It was on that mountain picnic, beside the winding road, that his child had seen a late wild rose, and had begged for it. It was the following spring that Buck had bought for her the rose bush that later she had loved and tended so. Buck's heart beat hard at the memory. He wondered what Jeff Wilkie had done with the bush. Buck had seen him take it from a place that had been made sacred by memories of the one whom the solitary mountaineer, having had in his bereavement a mystical chord in his nature touched, had come to think upon as the Rose of Sharon.

The little child was now fast asleep. Buck looked down at her damp flushed cheeks, her dewy hair, and the quiet rise and fall of the flowered frock over the tiny bosom. He saw in her, living, breathing albeit in sleep not quite of the world but therefore more real to him, all that he had lost and loved. It was vast comfort to him merely to hold her without thinking whether she was his or not.

But this reverie of his was now shocked and broken by the sound of a soft step on the clay yard by the corner of the cabin. It was not a natural step. There was caution in it; and few save Buck would have heard it at all. His quick glance now fell on his rifle. He had placed it within his reach; but the rocking of the chair had moved him slowly away from the doorjamb. Unless he put down the child he could not reach his gun.

"Well, I'm damned," said Buck under his breath. And this time he meant it.

"Buck, this is me—Jeff. Set still. I ain't a-gwine to harm you. I have seen what you are a-doing. Set still and don't wake her."

In another moment the tall form and bearded face of the owner of the cabin appeared at the door. The men's eyes met. Buck's were still smouldering in their blue light. But he saw no fear and no threat in his enemy's. Then the eyes of each turned on the sleeping child.

"I reckon she made you pick her up, Buck, and rock her off to sleep. She treats me thataway when she gets the mind to, 'specially lately since her mother's to Chun's Cove."

Jeff Wilkie had leaned something up outside the cabin; and Buck hardly needed

to see the heavy butt projecting by the doorstep to realize what it was. Jeff sat on the doorstill. He seemed at his ease; but it had always been easier for him to be amiable than it had been for Buck Saunders. Perhaps now it was because he was closer to Buck's rifle than the owner was.

"Buck," he said soberly, "if it hadn't been for that little gal asleepin' there, I sure would have made way with you awhile back. But after you picked her up I couldn't make my aim separate you two."

"*Me*, Jeff? Made away with *me*? When I come up the mountain I 'lowed I was the one a-going to do the shootin'."

"Yes, maybe so," assented the other; "but I seen you comin', and I knowed it meant no good for me or mine. I got my gun and left the house, where this little 'un was asleep. I slips in below you, Buck. But then you come here, and little Bess, she was in your lap. It's all her doings."

"I had done come to fix you, Jeff, for what you had done to me," Buck admitted; "but while I was a-watching for you, this little 'un, she fell off the step. She 'minded me of the one what I lost, and I jest couldn't stand for to see her crying, and nobody to comfort her like."

"The first time I got a fair sight on you was when you were a-pickin' her up."

"Jeff," said Buck slowly, "this here baby child has took away my wanting to kill you. But, Jeff, you has got to bring back that rose bush that you stole off my baby's grave. That was what brought me up here, Jeff Wilkie. I come after it and after you. I don't want you no more, but I wants it."

Jeff's eyes widened, and the quick lift of his head showed his surprise

"Why, Buck," he exclaimed. "I didn't know that rose was a-growin' on your little one's grave! I never would have teched it if I had knowed that. I was a-comin' up by the run—trespassing, I'll admit—when I saw that there pretty flower bush. You know this little Bess here of mine loves everything that's pretty. So, as it was a-rainin' and as I knowed the roots would come up nice like, I said, 'I'll try to get that bush, and set it out to home for the little one.' She'd been lonesome like since her mother's away. Buck, I'm sure sorry, that I am. I didn't understand. I'll take the rose back for you and plant it where it should be."

At this the child stirred in Buck's arms. Her eyes opened. She smiled faintly at him. Then she caught sight of her father.

"Pa's come," she said, slipping down out of Buck's lap and running over to her father. "Pa," she added, looking back at Buck, "he done fetched me a pretty flower."

Buck Saunders rose, picked up his rifle, set the hammer at the safety, and stepped out of the cabin.

"Jeff," he said, "this is quits for keeps. And you must come to see me, little Bess," he added. "I has some doll-babies in my house that ain't a-being cared after like they should be."

As Buck turned to go, Jeff joined him, and the two passed together to the edge of the clearing.

"She will keep the rose bush, Jeff," Buck said in parting. "'Pears like she loves them things same as my little 'un used to. And I reckon," he added musingly, "that mine has all the pretty flowers she wants, thar where she's gone."

He went down the mountain path, aglow in the sunset. "Thar where she's gone," he repeated to himself, "she has the Rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley."

Farther on, as the strange frustration of his vengeance by the Everlasting Mercy became apparent to him, he said thoughtfully: "Well, I'm damned!"

Not many people could express mystic religious feeling in this way. But Buck Saunders could.

NEXT month: PUTTING ON ARBUTZOFF. Harry Lauder breaks up the show at the Suitcase Theatre.

ON THE SQUARE

By HOWARD PHILIP RHOADES

In which a Russian nobleman stubs his toe, and a personally conducted tour of Greenwich Village degenerates into an international affair, and one of the conquering sex puts a ring in somebody's nose.

OR an optimistic man, Jeffrey Douglas' face was troubled, as he stood at the office window and stared moodily down at the East River, where a ridiculous little tug was puffing along with two barges, either one of which would have held fifty of his cigars.

As he felt two very pretty eyes laughing at him he turned and said: "Art? You speak of it as if it were heaven, but it afflicts you like a disease. Have I any in me? Decidedly not! Thank Dollar Bill, the God of Business, I still get regular haircuts and wear human ties!"

A peculiar smile played over the face of the girl. While her views apparently opposed his, yet one could find pleasure in her look at his denunciation.

"But," she protested, mildly, "you have been asking me about art—the Village—and the Count."

"The Count! If you, an American girl—and a very pretty one—who ought to be making some practical American happy, are so crazy about nobility, you should pose as the heiress of some bloated plutocrat."

From the midst of her flush over his compliment, she said, "You are misjudging the man, Mr. Douglas. He is not here to marry money. He is here in the interest of his people who are bleeding and dying. He needs friends to help him bear the burden which he is here to lift from himself and his people."

"What is he, a slacker from the Petrograd bomb zone, or over to buy ear tabs for the Don Cossacks?"

"Don't be absurd. He is seriously engaged. Indeed, those people you despise down there are playing a far more important part in the world crisis than you suspect."

"Really? Well, I should like to meet the Count."

"You would?"

"Yes," he said decidedly, staring in his frank way, directly into her eyes. Besides his frankness, he was sharp, sharp enough to have been a very good newspaper reporter, practical enough to have left the newspaper field to become editor of a house organ.

He towered above her, with the stamp of the athlete who has not left the football field so far behind but that the cheers still echo, with the grace of a man who fits into ready mades in the closest human approach to the glorious youths of the poster world.

"I should," he continued. "When shall I be allowed?"

"You've been making such fun of me and the Village people. I don't think you deserve to go."

"Well, perhaps I was a little unjust. But I hate to see you get dementia red-inkus, when you are so sensible, and so wholesome. I don't like to see a female regular fellow become a Greenwich rummy."

"Some of my best friends live in the Village."

"For instance?"

"Well," she hesitated, "the Count."

"The Count be blasted with T. N. T! Here I am taking you to dinner and the theater—as often as you'll go—reading the business articles in the magazines to find out how to get my salary raised, and everything, and you hardly notice me. Then along comes a gefullte fish, full of caviar, and you eat out of his hand. I've *got* to meet him."

She looked away, fearful that he would see her face. She felt like saying, "You never spoke as if you noticed me before." But she only asked, "Would you be nice to him?"

"Would I give a man who knocked me down with a ball bat, a golf club to beat me with? Yet for your sake, I guess I could turn the other cheek, as long as he didn't use overweight gloves."

"You think you could meet him without violence?" she asked seriously.

"Well, I'm so rough I swear at printers. But I will try to restrain my fierce American duelling tendencies. When do we go?"

"Are you really serious?" she smiled.

"I am always serious," he said, sitting on the corner of her desk, and bending so that his broad, athletic build accentuated her slender lines.

"It is you," he said, "who are frivolous. You, a business girl, talk of art!"

"You are not serious," she charged. "It is for your type they get up frothy revues, and run lobster palaces. You talk of business!"

"Down in Minetta Street the ragpicker jostles the wielder of blank verse. Can't business and art combine?" His hand dropped upon her little pink fingers. "May I come to the Village with you to-night?"

"Oh!" she jerked her hand away. "I don't even allow the Count to do that!"

"The Count be submarined! May I come to the Village, and look after the sinking myself?"

"If you'll promise not to attack art, and make fun of anybody. I want you to take it seriously. You'll hear things about the war that will make your eyes open."

"And we start—when?"

"At five, if the practical salesmen and managers of your stupid world stop giving me letters for the day," she said, as her fingers started to speed over the machine.

Jeffrey Douglas watched as he often had from the door to his office, which was just behind her place. Often he had longed to tell her how she looked the day he came after the position of editor of the house organ of the big toy firm. He closed for the position on that first call, and was told that his letters were to be taken by one of the girls of the outer office. Often he wished that he might tell her how he hoped, as he passed her on the way out, that his stenographer might be she.

That was three months ago. But he still remembered how he felt when he found the first letter necessary. The general manager had not said which girl was to take his letters. The slim girl with the golden hair, at that moment, was showering from her machine a fusillade of clicks. Besides her there were two rather severe ladies and a fat girl with glasses.

He went back and wrote the letter himself. He had done so for years in newspaper offices, and a stenographer seemed an affectation after all. It was not until one day the boss found him writing a business letter himself, that the stenographer matter was settled. "Let the girls take your letters, Mr. Douglas," was the order. "That's what we have them for."

Fortune smiled. Miss Ames was reading. Douglas smiled apologetically, and explained: "Just a short one. You see," he added in his frank way, "there are not enough baby dolls to go around." She rippled a little laugh, and he colored, and explained, "I mean I'm having a photograph made for the magazine, and want one of the salesmen to send me in a special doll we haven't in stock."

Her little rippling laugh somehow made him weak and exasperated. In college days he had been an athletic giant, but a poor ball room star. Later, in Park Row days he met women of the many types the reporter finds, and learned to sift the truth from the camouflage when the younger beaux and Johnnies began to boast. It could be said generally that his knowledge of women was good. Yet here was a girl who brought back the self-consciousness days of college, who made him dumb and uncertain.

Such, at least, had been conditions until this afternoon, when a discussion of art, especially as it pertained to Miss Ellen Ames, had brought forth the foregoing conversation.

Miss Ames was happy, for a woman in love is happiest when she feels that she is

more than a passive party, that she has been able to force the issue. Why be loved by two men who talk love, but do nothing? The modern woman delights to put her finger into the game of love—yet, perhaps, no more than did Cleo of the Nile, or Eve, who appeared at the first winter garden. No man can say.

The young man who had turned back into his office, and tried to apply himself to his task, may have known that the girl was forcing him against an adversary, or he may not. Some men are happy when the issues are forced. But at least one thing Douglas knew: he was determined.

When they reached the street, and launched into the press of the homeward bound, Miss Ames turned toward the Sixth Avenue elevated.

"No," interposed Douglas, "this is a regular party, motor and all," and piloted her toward Fifth Avenue.

In the bus he spread out before them his newspaper. "Hum," he said. "Help for Russia! Look at this: 'Food Ships to Leave Atlantic Port to Aid Loyal Russian Forces. Government Determines to Aid Fighting Faction.'"

"Why do you pick out the Russian news?" she thrust.

"It's the lead news. Besides it's to be a Russian evening. I'm interested in caviar, samovars, Tolstoy and vodka. Do you think the Count knows anything about this?"

"He misses little—he and the group which surrounds him. If I could only make you understand how much some of these people are interested in world politics."

"The Count may even have a remedy for curing Russia," ventured Douglas.

"Don't scoff. I've heard of bigger things around the Square."

"Such as 'The relative inspiration of Oolong versus Bronx in preparation of a treatise on the favorite cravat colors of Oscar Wilde.'"

"Peace, unbeliever," she pointed. "The business world is behind. You enter the sanctuary of art."

"The Washington arch," he said, looking up. "We are now on the Square. On the Square where the short-haired girls and long-haired boys come out to shake off the ashes and let the wind purge them of the sweet odors of the Village. It is not the Village and the Village is not the Square, yet they are identical in the Sunday supplements, and it must be so. I've reported parades from this spot, and tried on a hot summer night to find a single native-born American. But now I come to see the world of art, and I give myself to it and you."

She lead the way from the point where they stepped off the bus. It was but a block or two, and then she pointed ahead at a faint light. "There," she said, "is the White Weasel where there are undercurrents of international things which would surprise a diplomat."

Art, having had so many sacrifices made in her favor, is inclined to compensation, and frequently is found in lowly neighborhoods, while her dressier sister, Commerce, commandeers the places of pomp. They found the more accomodating sister now in the midst of such sacrifice. Her shrine was in the basement of an ancient brick, between Pete the ice, coal and wood man, and an Italian undertaker, who constantly kept a funeral car in front of his place.

"Indicating," said Douglas, as he noted this, "that art is long and life is short."

The shrine itself was bounded above by cigarette smoke, on the sides with futuristic monsters, below by rough pine boards. It housed a heterogeneous collection of humans, worshipping, incidentally, Bacchus and the American Tobacco Company.

"These are true Villagers," whispered Ellen, as they were seated. "It's later in the evening that sightseers from uptown come to spy. This is the vesper hour of the faithful, when art and secret affairs are discussed."

"Will they say anything about soup and roasts," Douglas was inquiring, when he heard Ellen greeting an acquaintance.

"How do you do, Miss Fancheon?"

He rose, for an auburn-haired lady, with a cigarette, had halted at their table. Ellen introduced them, adding, "Miss Fancheon knows more about Tchekhoff than anybody south of Fourteenth Street."

"And more about liquor than anybody north of it," laughed Miss Fancheon, rather unsteadily. "Y'know sometimes I wish I were the bottom table cloth in a red ink factory, so I could be bazhed in booze."

Ellen tried to hide a trace of embarrassment inspired by Douglas' look, and, as Miss Fancheon was seated, said, behind her hand, "She's *such* a character."

"Count'll be over shoon," imparted Miss Fancheon. "He had a good one started when I saw him this afternoon, and tonight he'll be all decorated up. He's a great little fellow, Miss Ellen, and all dippy over you."

Ellen's eyes were cast down. Somehow there was a difference in this atmosphere of abandon, which she had indulgently tolerated, but kept aloof from herself, when Douglas was there to look at her. She was not able to laugh him out of countenance as in the office now, and she felt that his eyes were upon her as those of a parent upon a naughty child.

They had started to order, when suddenly they became conscious of a ripple which spread from the front door backwards through the White Weasel. Everybody assumed an attitude of attention. Even the waiter straightened as it reached him. There was a hum which grew, as when a personage approaches.

"The Count!" breathed Miss Fancheon. Douglas did not look at once toward the door. He was peering narrowly into the face of Ellen Ames. Something he saw there made him bristle with determination.

Now a tall young man, who mingled a certain majesty with a studied martyrdom, was beside their table. His hair was long, his dress careless, and his rather wild, glaring eyes encircled by horn-rimmed glasses of huge size. It was the wild glare and the studied martyrdom which upset the majesty in the mind of Douglas, and made him feel not at all uneasy in the presence of the Count.

As the introductions were over, and the Count sank into his chair he breathed upon Douglas that sort of odoriferous wave that one meets in passing a saloon door, in summer. But there were immediate advantages resultant of the Count's company.

For instance Tony, the proprietor, quickly appeared, deferential and eager to serve. He seemed on exceptionally good terms with the Count, and willing to do almost anything to please him.

With quick gestures and broad smiles he hurried the waiter who brought the hors d'œuvres, and at its heels that harmless ghost of the grape, the usual table d'hote wine.

"Signor will have d'wine?" beamed Tony, personally waiting upon the Count.

"Whisky," ordered the Count disdainfully, in very clear English. Later he had a bottle of seltzer brought, and, as he drank the more virulent liquid, his eyes glared more wildly, and each instant he looked more and more as if he were going to say something momentous.

As he gave attention for a moment to Miss Fancheon, Douglas whispered to Ellen: "I thought vodka was forbidden among the Russians."

"Hush!" she warned. "He has been driven to this. He told me recently he cannot bear the strain, and must have stimulants as badly as he dislikes them."

"He certainly does hate them," murmured Douglas, as the Count drained his glass.

Of a sudden the noble saw someone across the room, and started excitedly in his chair. "There is Ivan!" he said. "He is to report to me conditions in Vladivostok. Won't you come?" he asked Ellen.

"If you will pardon us," she begged, and they were gone.

For a moment Douglas sat silent, staring at the by no means spotless cloth. Then he felt the eyes of Miss Fancheon upon him, and heard her say, "What do you think of the Count, Mr. Douglas?"

"Well—I—really, I have met none of the nobility before," he explained, "and have not had time to form an opinion."

"He is in close touch with the world situation," said Miss Fancheon, still staring in her intimate way. "He is a man of affairs, the sort who can captivate women."

"Has he any particular one in mind at present?" Douglas asked directly.

"He thinks a great deal of Miss Ames,"

said Miss Fancheon, "a very great deal."

"Well, has he—that is—serious intentions?"

"I don't just get your meaning. He wants to give himself to her."

"I beg your pardon."

"I say he has offered himself to her in a state of true love."

Douglas started forward. "I did not know he had proposed," he gasped.

"Proposed?" Miss Fancheon gave a searing little laugh. "Oh, he didn't propose marriage—I think that's what you meant. He simply offered himself to Miss Ames. The Count wouldn't consider marriage."

She said the last word as if it were equivalent to murder or some loathsome disease.

Douglas gurgled inarticulately.

"Don't be surprised—or mediaeval," urged Miss Fancheon. "None of us care for marriage. It's for fogies. Why"—she was looking at him in a very caressing way—"even I, with all my Mid-Victorian ways, don't believe in marriage."

"I'll—" Douglas was starting to say, as he half rose, and met the returning Ellen and the Count. His attempt to address the latter was overruled by the Count's inordinate eagerness.

"Friends!" cried the Count. "My hour is here! Ivan has reported opportunity to bathe our cause in glory. You read in the papers of the sailing of food ships to the so-called loyal Russians?

"Long before the papers knew this," cried the Count, dramatically, "I had word. I sent my agent two days ago, to verify the report which came to me secretly. Working night and day he has found it true. Money-mad merchants would sell your country's honor for a little gold. They would—but they shall not!"

He sank to the table, his eye glittering madly. Motioning them nearer, he said: "I have not been in this country for months as secret agent of my people—those who would free Russia—for nothing. In the hour when these fools think to give aid and comfort to mine enemies they shall die!" He leaned forward, with intense passion in his face, and repeated it: "They shall die!"

There had come to the features of Douglas a look not less strong as he heard the intense words of the Count. While Miss Ames and Miss Fancheon sat spellbound, Douglas was listening eagerly—and waiting.

"At a certain pier," continued the Count, "near the foot of Canal Street, lies the first food vessel ready to sail. It shall never start. To-morrow at the appointed hour it will be a wreck at the bottom of the North River. I, personally, shall cause its end!"

As his auditors looked on, he added: "I know I can speak thus to you, the friends of liberty, and the enemies of despotism. In yonder case Ivan carries the secret engine. We go to spill the blood of those who would rain it upon our sacred land. Only the intervention of a large force could defeat our purpose. But that cannot be, for I know my secret is locked in your hearts."

He had risen and taken a step backward. "Drink to me, friends," he said in a low, intense voice. "Drink on! And the draughts you take shall be fraught with history. For I go with Ivan in the name of liberty!"

At his signal the man from the other table joined him. Ivan was carrying a small square handbag. As they stepped toward the door the Count turned once more and waved adieu.

Douglas stole a glance at Ellen. He moved nervously in his chair, and eyed Miss Fancheon momentarily. She answered his look with a very Latin shrug. Gesticulating with the finger which bore the cigarette, she said, conclusively, "Well, there you are!"

Douglas seemed about to speak, but restrained himself. Miss Fancheon's unconcern over the Count's departure became more pronounced, as she sensed Douglas's attitude. She made as if to start. "If you will excuse me," she said, lightly, "there are some friends over here I wish to see."

She was hardly out of hearing when Douglas leaned quickly forward. "Come!" he commanded.

"Where?" began Miss Ames.

He made no reply as he helped her on

with her coat, intent on speed. He laid money on the table to cover their bill, and then ordered, "Quickly!" as he pushed her toward the door.

Not far off, beside one of the ultra hotels of the region, they found a taxi. He hurried the girl into the machine, and ordered, "Canal and West Streets, in a hurry!"

"What are you going to do?" asked a small subdued voice beside him. It was not the voice of Ellen Ames, who had made the vampire's best play that afternoon by forcing the issue, but the plaint of a pale little girl who, in her concern, snuggled rather closer to him than she wished. Just as he had been the reproving parent in deepest Bohemia, he was now equally masterful as the bold gladiator.

Perhaps the air of dependence which came over her before she knew made her realize she was a little outside the rules. At any rate she drew a little away, and a partial flash of her taunting way of the afternoon returned. "You won't hurt the Count, will you?" she asked.

"I don't know," rejoined Douglas. "I'd be a poor American to see such lawlessness, and do nothing."

"But the police—"

"No time for them. I've got to act. But you sha'n't be taken into danger. You are to stay in the machine and wait."

"No—I'm going along," she said.

The machine was jolting into West Street. Douglas peered out.

"Look!" he cried.

She followed his finger. Two men were hurrying beneath an electric light toward the door of one of the piers. One carried a small hand satchel.

"Stop here and wait!" Douglas ordered the driver. He helped the girl out, protesting against her going. Insisting that she must, she followed across the broad expanse of West Street into the door that had just closed upon the men.

"I haven't even a gun," breathed Douglas. "This may be foolish, but I've got to get them in time."

Seeing was the difficulty. But as they advanced amid the mountains of freight, gradually a far-off glimmer was carried to them, and they saw the two figures pass through still another door.

"They're going to the boat now," whispered Douglas. "Please stay here. We can't tell what might happen."

She only clung to him. "Don't leave me here," she begged. "I've got to go on. It's dark—and I want you!"

"Silence and tiptoes," ordered Douglas, and they passed out through the smaller door. Above them was the sky, and distant lights of the Jersey Shore were like stars. The cold air of the North River chilled their cheeks.

The man's heart was thumping swiftly. His arm closed around her as he whispered, "I've got to get them quick. But where are they? I can't see—I—"

His words were cut off. Strong arms gripped them both. Ellen gave a scream, and Douglas fell to fighting his very strong captor like a madman.

"Stop or I'll hurt you!" came a sharp command. It had a note of authority, and Douglas blurted, "Who are you?"

"You are arrested by the United States government!"

A flash light played over the astonished young man and woman, and they caught a glimpse of olive drab khaki.

"If you're soldiers guarding the place," cried Douglas, "don't waste your time on me. I'm chasing two men who came to bomb that Russian provision ship."

He pointed at the black hulk barely visible against the dark sky. His answer was a suppressed snicker.

"Bomb that boat?" asked a voice. "That boat gets its bums of a summer night when the bunch leaves a trail of empties all over the Palisades, on the way home. It's a passenger boat laying in. If there's a Russian boat to leave these piers to-night we're still waiting word from the Czar on it."

"But I saw two men come in—one with a bag or package—"

"You mean the making of a package. You saw the night watchman and his friend come from Dutch Jake's with a camouflaged growler. We're on duty, so we hate it as bad as you. What we want to know is who you are, and what you're doing here."

"There's a mistake," said Douglas. "Take us out to the light."

Someone turned on a tungsten in the wareroom, and a voice exclaimed: "Douglas, the reporter."

"I've reformed now," laughed the accused, in a relieved way. "Patrolman Lafferty, how are you?"

"Inspector Lafferty, of the Intelligence Office," corrected the speaker.

"Anyhow, I'm glad it's my old headquarters friend. I guess you can vouch for my character and patriotism. You know if I were here to do anything violent I wouldn't bring a girl with me."

"Well," smiled the officer, gallantly, "she doesn't just look like one of the ladies of the Battalion of Death."

"This is the situation," began Douglas, and sketched the evening's happenings.

"And what was that place again?" Lafferty asked, when he concluded.

"The White Weasel."

"Around the corner from the Square. Just between the Pink Pomeranian and Yvonne's Madhouse."

"You know it perfectly."

"I ought to. I guess I never told you I was one of that new group of young Irish poets until my money gave out, and I had to go to work. I know a plumber who used to paint pictures, and a butcher, who used to compose, over in the Village; but, of course, only a few of us have managed to get into our proper spheres. It takes most of them time—time."

He paused a moment, thoughtful. But only a moment. His eyes lighted, and he said: "Your Count must be investigated. I have a notion—but we shall see. Boys, you keep close watch on things, and I will go to the Village with these people and investigate. He may be at some other pier now. But in the Village we can best catch his trail."

On the way they picked up two reserves. Douglas bent forward eagerly, the old newspaper fire aroused.

At their destination they made their way through the café, across to the rear of the barroom. This was partitioned off from that artistic part of the establishment. There they found Tony the proprietor, and the first question of Lafferty paled his swarthy face.

"He's not-a here, meester; I no see him," he shrugged. "Maybe he go away. I n'know."

"What for?"

"Maybe write-a da verse, or paint-a da pict'. I n'know."

"What you got in here?" demanded Lafferty, trying a door at the rear.

"Oh, meester!—"

"Come on with the key!" was the sharp command.

Tony unlocked the door.

The big policeman threw it open. One moment he stared into the place, a common saloon back room, with chairs and tables, and then he silently beckoned to the others.

In the center, on an aged sofa, his hat and glasses awry, in danger of sprawling upon the floor, fearful snores issuing from his gaping mouth, lay the Count.

Lafferty walked over and stood beside him.

"Give me your mace, Dugan," he ordered. "You know that's the only bad thing about the Secret Service. They give you no club for hotfooting. I love it once in a while to keep up my biceps." He laid the mace unmercifully against the exposed shoe sole of the recumbent Count.

As the latter came to life, Lafferty stood over him, and looked down critically. "I just wanted to see your eyes," he said. "You're the bird the District Attorney took seriously as a spy for two whole days, until he found you suffer from hallucinations of the vocal cords as well as the mind. A spy," he laughed. "A spy from Russia!"

Into the awkward silence wobbled a strange figure. A shawl was over her lean shoulders, and her gray hair in a knot. She left on the table in the obscure corner, where she had sat unnoticed, a vessel of suds as yet half scuttled.

"A spy from Roosia—a Count!" she cackled. "Sure, here I have the Count's baggage—what's left of it. He owes me a month's board, and I'm not wantin' him to steal out any more of it, as he did tonight in a little bag. I brought the rest along to make sure. I'm here drinkin' me

beer, and waitin' fer him to git sober enough to throw in the jug. I'm glad ye officers came without callin'... A spy from Roosia, eh?"— she retreated, and dragged out a battered suitcase—"Look at that!"

On the end they read: "Elmer Bowers, Snyder's Creek, Ind."

"That was his name when he landed here," said the old woman, derisively. "He's pickled one night and tells me how he went to business college, read a book on Socialism, and then came East to be an artist. Sure, we're all artists down here, and me teckneek in blowing off a schooner and me execooshum in puttin' wan under me bilt is as good as any of thim."

"Well," interrupted Lafferty, "this is no case for the Intelligence Office. What do you say, Dugan, to an arrest for plain drunkenness?"

There was a burst of emotion behind them. Tony, who had been listening, appeared before the policemen in excited supplication.

"N'nu, meester. No take my Count! Please no! Leesin! Tony is wiser wop dan other. He only Italian which have what you call da real Green'ich Village place, with what you call-a atmospheer! He go through all animal, and find only weasel not taked for name. So he take him, and then make-a long think. 'What I got have make-a dem uptown peop' think they in a real Green'ich Village place?' One-a grand-a beeg bunch, he come. I get da Count—da fina, beeg-a, good-a-look, much-a talka fell'. My gang he's grow, ever' night. Maybe other fellers need a crowd. Not so Tony. Hees Count enough. Oh, please, meester copper, you-a no take my Count?"

"If you've really found some use for this fellow," assured Lafferty, "I'd be the last to take him away from you."

The Count who had sat in maudlin appeal, let drop his head. Tony began effusive thanks.

"If the man's working thin I'll garnishee him," began the landlady aggressively.

"He get-a no pay, but drinks," said Tony.

"Will, yuh poor Wop, do you think I'd be throwing a judgment like that in the sewer?" asked the old woman. She wobbled after the policeman, as they started away. The Count was overcome, sobbing softly.

For the first time since they had entered Douglas looked at Ellen. She fled to him like a scared child. He put his arm around her, and they left behind the smoke, the monsters, and the worshippers of Art. A moment later the night air of the Square cooled their cheeks, and they fared northeast, past empty benches and barren trees to where the Arch loomed gray against the shadowy night.

Not a word was spoken until they were beside the great stone shaft. Then: "Jeffrey," she said, "I'm hungry. Do you know we've had almost nothing to eat, and it's nearly nine."

He had guided her into the shadow of the Arch. Away stretched the myriad lights of the world's greatest city. On his lips lingered the world's oldest story.

"I'm hungry, dear," he whispered, as he drew her to him, "for you. Have you had enough of art?"

"No." She pretended to escape. He dragged her back. She whispered in his ear, "I'm strong for the man who understands the art of pleasing me."

"You mean—" he started.

And for reply she snuggled close.

"Then you never loved that faker?" he blurted. "You saw through him."

"I was disappointed in the Count," she laughed, "but not disappointed in love. One evening he said, 'I offer you myself.' I told him the offer came too late, and laughed at him. He was very angry. Yet, poor fellow, he served his purpose."

Her last sentence was lost upon Douglas, who was eager to say: "You thought he proposed. Oh, Ellen, I would like to be your guardian, if I can't be your husband. Tell me, dear, will you marry me—on the square?"

"Come!" she cried, and ran away, under the Arch, and up Fifth Avenue to the shade of Washington Mews.

There he caught her, and, between kisses, she said, "I'll marry you, truly, if that's what you mean. But in the Land of Be Yourself—not on the Square!"

THE HOUSE ON CHESTER STREET

By WALTER A. DYER

Often, in retrospect, a man goes back to his Huckleberry Finn days; once in an age he makes an actual journey back home. In this case, the journey leads to the end of the rainbow and to the beginning of a new chapter.

ONCE upon a time there was a red-headed boy with freckles across the bridge of his nose and something of the barbarian in his nature. He lived in a comfortable if not an elegant house on Chester Street, with a good-sized back yard that had to be mowed in summer and a good deal of sidewalk that had to be shoveled in winter, and he somewhat perfunctorily attended the school on the other side of the street. After school hours and on Saturdays and during vacations the boy used to go "up street," where there lived other boys in familiar houses. They used to play run-sheep-run, and relievo, and hare and hounds, starting from a contractor's stables in a side alley, and baseball in the vacant lots at the top of the hill, which was a good place, also, for flying kites. The hill, too, was splendid for coasting in the winter.

Sometimes the boy, who was known as Redney, used to go off across the railroad tracks with his companions to a place where there were woods and the faint suggestion of Indians. Here there were chestnut trees, too, and a pond beyond the brickyard where one might go indecently in swimming.

The boy's parents were very good to him, though he took all that as a matter of course. The house on Chester Street was the center of his world, but he did not know then the place it was making for itself in his youthful heart. And when he became older and restless and ambitious, he left the old home blithely.

Howard Converse was thinking of that boy as he turned his car into Chester Street at the top of the long hill and slowly coasted down. It had been many years since he had seen Chester Street—busy, hard, cynical years, most of them. But things had happened to Converse that had softened him, and a man's boyhood is never so dear to him as when he is forty. A great longing, which he told himself was the senseless whim of an idle man, had drawn him irresistibly back at last to Chester Street.

He should have known better than to expect too much, but from the time he passed the first familiar landmarks he began to experience a depressing sense of disappointment. The lots at the top of the hill, where the baseball diamond had been, were now all built up with houses that did not even look new. The hill itself seemed extraordinarily short; all the houses and streets and distances seemed strangely dwarfed, preternaturally foreshortened. How shabby and shrunken it all looked, somehow.

He drove as slowly as he could, but before he realized it he was passing Tiger Willard's house. There was a stranger on the front porch. Converse wondered what had become of Tiger. It was odd that he should have lost sight so completely of one who, for so many zestful, crowded years, had played Damon to his Pythias. And here was Tom Rankin's house, and Jerry Martin's, and Pike Trevor's, and the old brick cottage where pretty Elsie Carpenter had lived. She had probably acquired a large family and a double chin by this time, he reflected. Oh, well, he hadn't expected to encounter anyone he knew.

As he crossed Hammond Street—unbelievably narrow, it appeared—a feeling of confusion beset him. New houses had been built between old ones, and they all looked huddled together and unfamiliar.

At the corner stood a six-story brick apartment house with an ornate doorway. Now what used to be there? Oh, yes, the double house where the Smiths and the Quimbys lived. And the new structure had pushed itself over into the Trasks' yard and all the cherry trees were gone.

Suddenly he brought the car to a stop before a little store with a plate-glass window behind which were arranged sundry pieces of furniture and bric-a-brac. Over the door there was a sign which read "J. Carley. Antiques."

What was all this? Converse rubbed his eyes in a dazed sort of way and looked back over his shoulder. Yes, there was the Stoddard house, with the old Porter apple tree in the yard, and here—

Gradually the truth broke in upon Converse. He raised his eyes above the flat roof of the shop and beheld a familiar gable with a round-topped attic window, and to the left of it the roof of the ell and the tops of the windows of his old bedroom. The store, then, had been built onto the old house, right across the front lawn. They must have torn away the piazza. A painfully vivid picture of that piazza flashed across his mind, and a vision of the red-headed boy who used to sit swinging in a hammock of a summer evening, watching the moon climb up through the branches of the maples, and dreaming long, long dreams.

Converse had the reputation of being an unsentimental, not to say cynical, bachelor, and through the passing years he had come to share that reputation with his friends. But now something very like a lump stuck in his throat and something that smarted got in his eyes. It struck him that this was not unlike gazing upon an old friend's face that had been horribly changed by disease. Converse swore between his clenched teeth and felt extraordinarily miserable. He did not know which he pitied the most, the red-headed boy who could never come back again to see this spoliation, or the man who wished he had never grown up.

For a long time Converse sat staring at the shop front, struggling to reconstruct mentally the old home as it had been. Then he came to his senses with a start, shut off his motor, and alighted. Since he had come so far he might as well go inside. It couldn't be worse than the outside.

He mounted the steps and opened the shop door, setting a bell jangling somewhere at the back of the house. There was no one in the shop, and Converse took a hasty survey of its contents. It was a typical antique shop; he had been in dozens like it. A cherry highboy, a veneered mahogany secretary, a tall clock with one of the brass balls missing, a pie-crust table, some mahogany chairs of the 1820 period, some Windsors, and the usual miscellany of foot-warmers, samplers, andirons, old china, and Sheffield plate, arranged with an eye to displaying their ancient beauties. Converse sniffed a little; he had been through all that sort of thing long ago.

A door opened softly—so softly that he scarcely heard it—and someone spoke in a gentle voice.

"Is there something I can show you, sir?"

Converse turned abruptly. In the back of his head there had lain a vague intention to be gruff and brusque, to demand who had wrought this shameful atrocity. Instead, he removed his cap and bowed to a little old lady in a black silk waist, with white ruching at the throat—an old-fashioned little old lady, with gray hair parted evenly in the middle and brushed back in two smooth curves over her forehead. Rather timid and helpless she looked as she stood with one hand on the back of a chair and the other nervously fingering a black-bordered handkerchief.

Instinctively and unintentionally Converse smiled a little, for the old lady's lips wore a wondrously sweet little quivering smile and the gray eyes behind her gold-rimmed spectacles were bright and gentle and so kindly. Converse, for all his practiced urbanity, was embarrassed. He felt somehow like a trespasser, as though he had intruded upon this little old lady's privacy.

"Why," said he at length, with something of an effort, "I might make a purchase—yes; a candlestick or an andiron—anything to give me the entrée. To tell

you the truth, I merely wanted to come in."

The little old lady looked puzzled and stood silently regarding him through her gold spectacles. It occurred to Converse that she was out of place in this shop, that she was not in the least fitted to be a saleswoman, that she should be seated in a quiet upper room (there used to be a grandmother's room, he remembered) in a rocking chair with a crocheted tidy on it, her feet on a hassock, and with someone to bring her a cup of tea or hold her skein of yarn. He felt somehow as though he were taking an unfair advantage of her.

"I really don't want to buy," said he. "I want to tell you something. Won't you sit down?"

He pushed forward one of the old Windsors in his courtliest manner, and she seated herself gracefully, quite as though this were an ordinary procedure of shop-keeping.

"You see," said Converse, "I used to live in this house when I was a little boy, and I haven't been in the place for twenty-five years. I got the notion that I'd like to see it again."

"Oh, my!" cried the little old lady brightening perceptibly, the wondrously sweet smile illumining her face. She was no longer puzzled; this was something she could well understand. "So you used to live in this house? Dear, dear!"

"It was a long time ago, wasn't it?" said he. "I find things changed a good deal. It is a bit disturbing—makes me feel old."

"Oh, *you* aren't old," she hastened to assure him.

"Tell me, do you own the house now?"

"No," she replied, a faintly troubled look passing across her face, "I rent it. I suppose I ought to give it up. It's too big a place for me, of course, but I wanted to try keeping the shop going for Elsie's sake. I'm afraid I haven't done very well."

"It's the cleanest antique shop I've ever seen," he asserted. "And who is Elsie?"

"She's my granddaughter. She will be in presently. We are all that are left now. Her mother died when she was born and I brought her up." This with obvious pride. "Her father persuaded the landlord to build this store eight years ago. That was John—John Carley—my son. A good son he was, too. He was doing very well with the business because he was honest and reliable and understood it, and some of the best people in town were his customers. He died last March."

Strangely enough Converse found the vision of the red-headed boy fading and his resentment vanishing before this new interest. He seemed to feel the spirit of John Carley among the pieces of old furniture and relics of a bygone day. Perhaps, after all, John Carley's ghost had a right to be here, too.

"And now there's only you and Elsie," supplemented Converse, "and you've been having a hard time to make the ends meet."

"Oh," she said, rising hastily, "I mustn't bother you with my troubles. Come; you want to see the old house."

He followed her through the door into what had once been the dining-room—now a painful combination of the familiar and unfamiliar. He stood rubbing his chin and frowning a little.

"I'm sorry," said the quavering voice at his elbow, "that things have been changed so. It must be very distressing."

"It is," said he, with unaccustomed candor. "It's he— I beg your pardon, Mrs. Carley. I'm really quite unaccountably upset. I shall recover my equilibrium presently. Would it be too much to ask you to let me wander about alone a bit, and see what there is that I recognize? I won't steal anything."

She threw a trustful little smile up at him. "By all means," said she. "Make yourself at home."

Converse started on one of the most unhappy little journeys he had ever undertaken, and yet he could not resist the fascination of it. The hand of the red-headed boy seemed to be in his, leading him on. He walked out into the kitchen first, and there came a vision here of his mother, in a blue-checkered apron, at the kitchen sink, and red-cheeked Bridget Flynn frying doughtnuts. The old woodshed, where the red-headed boy had once made kites and sailboats and wooden swords, was now a sort of store-room for broken antiques.

He turned back through the dining room and the sitting room and into the front hall, and then up the well-remembered stairs. Here was the room his father and mother had occupied. The black walnut bureau had stood between the windows, the marble-topped commode here by his sister's door, and over there the wide bed where, one gloomy day in February, his father had passed away, leaving the world a less joyous place to live in. He turned hastily, lest the picture become too vivid.

And here was his own room that had once seemed so large and fine. He allowed the red-headed boy to come to life, to stand before the mirror combing his despised curls, to dress himself shiveringly of a winter's morning, to toss his shoes recklessly into a corner, to kneel by the little cot bed—

Voices below recalled Converse to the present with a start. One was the quavering voice of the little old lady, the other was a gay little treble. He went down the stairs that used to lead to the piazza door, and found himself unexpectedly in the shop again. The voices came from within the house. Evidently Mrs. Carley had been telling her granddaughter about him.

"And he used to be a little boy here—right here in this house?" the child's voice was asking.

"Yes, right here, only there used to be a piazza, you know, where the store is, and other things were different."

"What things, Grandma?"

"Well, there used to be a big back yard, for one thing. He didn't have time to tell very much about it."

"Will he tell us some more?"

"Very likely."

Converse opened the door and stepped inside. Before him stood a little girl of perhaps ten years, small for her age, with a sweet, pretty face, brown curls, and big, interested brown eyes.

"This, I suppose," said Converse, "is Elsie."

"This is Elsie," said Mrs. Carley, and the child held out her hand.

"I'm pleased to meet you," said she, "but I guess I don't know your name."

Converse supplied the desired information and stood for a time holding the small hand in his big one, and gazing into the upturned face. More visions of the past were thronging in upon him.

"What was her mother's name—if you don't mind telling me—before she was married?" he asked the little old lady.

"Elsie Carpenter."

"I thought so," said Converse. "The resemblance is remarkable."

"Did you ever know Mamma?" asked Elsie.

"Very well, indeed," said he. "She lived in the little brick cottage up the street and we used to play together, when the boys weren't around. One day I dropped an angle worm down the back of her dress."

"Oh, how horrid!" cried Elsie, with a squirm.

"Yes, I guess it was," said Converse. "But, really, I liked your mother very much—very much indeed. It was very long ago."

"But I wish you hadn't teased her," said Elsie.

"So do I," said he. "But don't be afraid; I don't do so any more."

She smiled up at him trustingly. "I don't believe you could," said she.

Mrs. Carley excused herself and went out into the kitchen.

"Now," commanded Elsie, "tell me all about it—when you were a boy here."

Converse seated himself in a chair, and she climbed upon his knee. It was a strange attitude for Converse, but he liked it. He put his arm about her, and she felt soft and small and lithesome in the crook of it. There was a fragrance, too, about her hair and clean white frock that he liked.

"Once upon a time," he began, "there was a red-headed boy with freckles across the bridge of his nose."

For upwards of an hour they sat thus and chatted together while the little old lady busied herself in the kitchen.

When he had first beheld the altered house he decided to take a look around inside and then quickly shake the dust of Chester Street from his feet forever. But the edge of his disappointment had worn off somewhat. After all, the old house was still standing, and the recollections which

were now being called up were pleasant. Elsie was helping on that score. He was experiencing a sort of luxurious enchantment in thus dipping into the past in company with one who seemed somehow to be the red-headed boy's contemporary.

Before he realized how the time had slipped away, Mrs. Carley was announcing supper.

"Oh, I beg your pardon," exclaimed Converse, rising hastily. "I did not realize how late it was getting. I must run along."

A shadow of genuine disappointment crept over the little old lady's face.

"Oh, please don't go. We want you to stay so much."

Elsie seized his hand in a detaining clasp.

"But, surely," he protested, "it would be presuming on your hospitality."

"Not at all," she insisted. "You must stay here until to-morrow, anyway. You can have your old room, you know."

Elsie clapped her hands at this happy idea, and Converse, seeing that a refusal would give real pain, consented.

"Can I put my car around back?" he asked. "I'll just put the top up and I won't need to take it to a garage."

"Certainly, if there's room," said Mrs. Carley.

He went out and started his motor, backed and turned, and mounted the sidewalk at the right of the house where the coal wagons used to drive in.

At the end of the little driveway he turned the car around the corner of the house and stopped. As Mrs. Carley had intimated, there was no room to go in farther. For there was no back yard now—no long grape arbor, no rosebushes, no pear trees, no strawberry patch, no croquet ground, only a high board fence and a strip of weedy grass. Apparently the land had been purchased by the owner of the property adjoining at the rear. Converse hastened back into the house to shake off a renewed sense of depression.

In spite of blue devils that kept bobbing up in Converse's mind to disturb his enjoyment, it was a jolly little supper, and a jolly evening followed it. Converse felt extraordinarily at home. In fact, home hadn't seemed like this for a long, long time. The ineffably sweet, gentle face of Mrs. Carley, and the gray eyes beaming upon him from behind the gold spectacles, the merry laughter and unquestioning confidence of Elsie—these were things to which he was not accustomed. They stirred something within him that had long been sleeping. Two simple people—people of no account, as one might say—had seen fit to bestow upon him an unconcealed liking, and strangely enough it seemed to matter very greatly. It was a new thing to him, and yet in some way old—bound up with the things that concerned the red-headed boy and the hazy days of once upon a time. Very earnestly Converse desired to stay for a while.

He awoke early the next morning and found himself gazing at a well remembered crack in the ceiling plaster shaped like the Peninsula of Hindustan. At least, the crack had not been changed, though he fancied it had lengthened somewhat. An association of ideas brought a recollection of a week's illness following a grape-eating orgy in the back yard and a certain intense book of adventure by Harry Castlemon.

As he lay there a plan gradually took shape in his mind, and the plan was followed by action. Arising, he dressed quickly and went down to breakfast.

"Can you take a boarder for a week or two?" he asked abruptly.

The little old lady was taken aback.

"Why—why," she stammered, "we'd like to have you stay with us, but—I never thought of taking boarders, and you—I shouldn't want—"

"It's all right, if you'll take me," he interrupted. "I want to stay a while. You see I have nothing else to do and nowhere else to go. I'm sort of a loafer, you know—at this season of the year. I've thought it all out. I shall pay you $10 a week, which is little enough, but I know you wouldn't take more. And I shall keep shop. I know something about antiques myself. I shall endeavor to be as little trouble as possible."

Mrs. Carley was quite carried off her feet, but Elsie was frankly enthusiastic. Converse assumed the matter to be settled and changed the subject.

The first time the shop bell rang, he insisted on answering it. He began by simulating some of the enthusiasm he had once felt for old furniture and china, and presently he found himself talking rapturously of Chippendale and Queen Anne and Crown Derby and old brass. To the second caller he made a sale.

It did not take Converse long to discover that the little shop was not paying expenses.

"Mother Carley," said he, "I propose to enlarge and increase your business. I shall lend you a little capital at five per cent. I shall purchase stock and sell it at a profit of from ten to twenty per cent. You are to remain in the house and bake ginger cookies and knit me a gray silk muffler. If I get lonely I will send for Elsie."

This was after Converse had been a member of the family for four days. The little old lady had become somewhat accustomed to his extraordinary ways, and she liked them tremendously. It gave her a feeling of blessed security to have a man about the place that she could rely on. Her own capabilities in a business way were so limited. And it gave her no less joy to find that she could mother him, that there were times when he would come to her like a little red-headed boy in trouble, and talk and gain comfort.

There followed several mysterious trips in the automobile from which Converse returned bearing fine old mahogany and antique silverware. A small advertisement appeared in the daily papers, and customers became more numerous in the little shop on Chester Street. Mother Carley asked no questions; men could do such things. As for Converse, whose business adroitness had long been a matter of envy in certain commercial circles, this playing shop keeping was a lark.

"You are wonderful," said Mother Carley, fixing on him a glance little short of adoration. "I don't see how you ever manage it. And I don't know how I am ever going to thank you."

"Oh, it's easy enough, when once you've learned how," he replied. "Just technique, that's all. A mere matter of training. As for thanking me, don't try to. Don't you know that I am already heels over head in debt to you and Elsie? Don't you know that you have given me something that money can't pay for? Don't you understand that I've found something here that has been missing from my life ever since I was that red-headed boy? You are the wonderful one, Mother Carley, and you don't know it."

In those days Converse felt like one of the lotus eaters. He was living a dream of life, letting the time pass unobserved over his head, cut off from the outside world, receiving no mail, taking no thought for the future, careless as to whether or not his protracted absence might be a cause of concern to his associates, reveling in the atmosphere of a lost boyhood.

For in the intervals of business, when the little shop was quiet save for the slow ticking of the grandfather's clock which he had repaired, he would call Elsie out to him, draw her up to his knee, luxuriating in his contact with such a young, happy, warm little creature, and would tell her stories about the red-headed boy. Very often they were tales of escapades and frightful naughtiness, over which they would laugh together in a most uproarious manner.

"Of course," he explained, "I am telling you the amusing anecdotes that recur to me. Isn't it strange that goodness should not seem so interesting? For the red-headed boy was sometimes good. He really loved his mother, you know. And he went to Sunday School, and took good care of his best clothes, and saved his pennies, and was kind to the cat. And at one time he passed through a religious stage. Oh, he was awfully pious then!"

Elsie laughed delightedly.

"But I don't think he was a bad boy, any of the times," she insisted. "Not really bad—just mischievous. I like him, Uncle Howard."

Converse drew her a little closer to him.

"Thank you," he said simply.

But one day the calendar said September 1, and Converse felt a trifle alarmed. After all, there were other things that had to be thought of. All day he was preoccupied, and Elsie could wheedle out of

him no stories of the red-headed boy. And the next day, which was Sunday, he steeled his heart and took them for a ride in the motor car in the afternoon in order to break the news to them.

They went out past Five-Mile Pond, away beyond any place where the red-headed boy had been, out into the farm country where the corn was ripening and all the world seemed at peace. They were a perfect contrast, the old lady and the little girl, the one radiating goodness and calm joy, the other alive with the vivacious enthusiasms of childhood. They were very happy, those two—so happy that Converse had not the heart to spoil it.

It was not, indeed, until after supper, when they were still seated about the table, that he summoned the courage to tell them. He did it rather badly, he felt, as he watched the gladness die out of the two faces before him.

"But I will come back again," he hastened to add, "just as soon and as often as I can. If you knew how much this home means to me now, you would not doubt me. And I will arrange about the business so that it needn't worry you."

"Of course," said Mother Carley, "I knew all the time it would have to be so. I knew you must have affairs of your own to demand your attention. I'm afraid you've given us too much of your time already."

"I have given nothing," he asserted. "I have received more than you can ever understand. And this will be only the beginning."

"But, oh dear," moaned Elsie. "Oh dear!"

That night Converse tossed in his bed, unable to sleep, until the clock struck one. He was strangely depressed and it irritated him to feel that he had somehow lost his grip on his emotions. It was all very foolish, to let the thing affect him in this way. Then he fell asleep and dreamed a strange, inconsequential tangle of dreams in which the red-headed boy, and Mother Carley, and a little girl in a brick cottage, and all sorts of irrelevant things were fantastically mingled.

Suddenly he awoke with a start to find himself sitting bolt upright, his mind in a maze of confusion. Gradually the dream ideas passed from his brain and he became acutely conscious of smoke in the room—dense, acrid, hot, stifling smoke. He leaped from his bed and ran to the open window. The smoke seemed to be both outside and in. A crackling sound came to him from the shop below and a fitful, lurid light played on the tree trunk opposite the shop windows.

"Fire!" yelled Converse. "Fire!"

A head was thrust out a window across the street.

"Fire!" he shouted again. "Go ring in the alarm."

The head disappeared from the window and presently the front door opened and a man burst out, waved his arm at Converse, and dashed off down the street.

Satisfied that the alarm would be given, Converse started to investigate. Clad in his pajamas, he threw a leg over the window sill and stepped out. The tin roof of the shop was burning hot to his bare foot and he hastily withdrew it. A little tongue of flame curled up over the edge and disappeared again.

A sudden terror seized him. The house, he felt, was doomed, and the fire was spreading fast. There was no time to think of searching for the extinguisher that hung in the shop, and he could not wait for the firemen. Mother Carley and Elsie must be gotten out at once.

Taking a deep, stinging breath of the smoky air outside, he turned and burst through the door into the next bedroom where he knew the old lady was sleeping.

A little figure stumbled against him in the darkness, choking and sobbing. It was Elsie, awakened doubtless by the smoke and groping her way blindly in to her grandmother.

Converse picked her up in his arms and stumbled to the front window. The flat roof of the shop was just below, but he could not place her there. It was crackling hot, and the flames were even now reaching eagerly over the edge.

He turned and ran back through his own room, through the back hall, past the bathroom, through the little entry beyond, into the room over the kitchen that had

once been Bridget's room. It was pitch dark. He thanked fortune that he knew the house so well.

Back here the smoke was less smothering. Converse threw open the window and looked out. There was a sheer drop of fifteen feet to the ground. It couldn't be done safely.

At the left, just out of reach, he discerned the dim surface of the woodshed roof. Ah, he remembered now. Was the old lightning rod still there? He groped for it with his hand. Yes, still there. A red-headed boy had achieved this exploit once, but the red-headed boy had had two free hands to work with and no burden. Perhaps, though, it could be done. Elsie was very small and light.

Converse did not hesitate. He had often proved his strength and agility in sport. Holding Elsie in his left arm and seizing the lightning-rod with his right hand, praying that it might stand the strain, he drew himself and his burden out of the window and raised himself to a standing posture, with his left foot on the sill. Carefully he swung his right foot along until he felt the shingles of the woodshed roof. His legs were longer than the red-headed boy's; that was lucky.

Slowly, and with gasping breath, he shifted his weight to his right foot and stood poised for a moment. Then, with a great effort, he swung himself and his burden sheer around and threw himself prone upon the sloping roof of the shed.

There was one dreadful moment in which he felt them slipping, but he managed to draw up his feet and check this. Bare feet hold well on shingles.

Then, after catching his breath, he crawled up to the ridge of the shed, dragging Elsie with him.

Elsie was still sobbing with fright, but the sobbing reassured him.

"There, you're safe now," he told her. "Keep tight hold of the ridge-pole and don't fall. When you see the men come around, call to them. I've got to go for Grandma now."

He kissed her tangled hair, slid swiftly down to the eaves, and swung himself back through the window.

Inside the smoke had increased in density and he had forgotten to fill his lungs with air. A cry of anguish escaped him as he thought of Mother Carley in her bed. Had help come in the meantime? Would he be too late? No vision of a red-headed boy arose before him now, but of a gentle little old lady, with mild gray eyes smiling at him kindly from behind gold-rimmed spectacles.

How interminable the way seemed and how intricately winding. He stumbled over furniture and into door jambs, and he was conscious of a pain in his chest that seemed to paralyze his limbs. He grew panicky, and confused as to his direction.

Suddenly he became conscious of a murky glare—the front windows. Guided by the light he staggered across his own room, around the bed, and over Mother Carley's threshold. A thick blanket of hot, black smoke seemed to be thrown over his head. His senses swam, he reeled, and, tripping on the rug, fell prostrate on the floor.

When Converse opened his eyes he was in a strange bed, and the figure of an unfamiliar woman stood beside him with a glass in her hand. He tried to speak, to ask where he was, but the woman bade him be quiet and gave him something from the glass. He was aware of a pain in his chest, nausea, and a severe headache; he could not think. He closed his eyes and presently lost consciousness again.

When he awoke it all came back to him—the heat, the smoke, the woodshed roof, the puzzling labyrinth of rooms. He turned on his pillow. The woman was sitting in the window.

"Did they put the fire out?" he asked.

"Yes, they put it out," she answered.

"Did they find Elsie?"

"Yes, she's all right. She's downstairs waiting for you to get better."

"And Mrs. Carley?"

"You mustn't try to talk just yet," admonished the woman.

Converse understood. It could hardly have been otherwise. He hoped she had never wakened. The thought that she might have been terrified, might have suf-

fered, appalled him. Then a great tenderness for the little old lady came over him, and pity for Elsie, and for himself, and unaccustomed tears oozed burningly from his eyes and rolled down upon the pillow.

Converse recovered promptly; it was only the smoke that had overcome him and the firemen had not been long in finding him. He felt the need of action, and the thought of little Elsie haunted him.

He found her still frightened and pitifully subdued, but apparently unharmed.

"Oh, Uncle Howard," she cried, "I'm so glad nothing happened to you."

"I'm too tough an old nut for that," said he. "Come, my dear, there is much to be done. First of all we must buy some clothes."

Converse, indeed, found plenty to do. While Elsie was being cared for by kindly neighbors he stole over to the old house to see how matters stood there. The little shop was burned out and the front of the house was a charred and smoke-blackened ruin. He managed to make his way up the back stairs. His own room was unrecognizable. In Mother Carley's room things had been set to rights a bit; the bedding had been removed. Some friendly person had evidently been there. Doubtless a coroner's inquest had been held without his assistance, and an undertaker had taken charge of other matters. On the bureau still stood a bunch of withered goldenrod and wild asters. He had picked them for Mother Carley that last Sunday. It was enough. Converse turned and fled.

His business instinct led him to an insurance office where he disposed of certain matters relative to the stock of the antique shop and the household goods. And here Converse encountered the landlord.

"That decides me," said the landlord. "The old fire trap comes down now and an apartment house goes up there. There may be some money in that."

So this was the end of the house on Chester Street.

There were also visits to a lawyer's office and conferences with a few relatives, and then a quiet little funeral and a doleful ride to the cemetery, with Elsie clinging to his hand through it all.

A feverish desire to get away from it, to try to forget it, to see the last of Chester Street seized upon Converse, and as soon as he decently could he made ready for his departure.

The motor car emerged from a garage where it had been looked over and supplied with air and water and oil and gasoline. On the front seat Converse held the wheel, with a grim, set expression on his face. Around his neck was a gray silk muffler, hand knitted. Beside him sat Elsie Carley, looking very small and wistful.

"Aren't we going up Chester Street, Uncle Howard?" she asked plaintively.

"Why—you don't want to, do you?"

"Just once more," she pleaded.

"Well," said he, "for one last look."

They turned at last into the familiar street, past the school house, and rolled slowly by the hideous ruin. The old house that Converse had come so far to see was a shell now, the soul gone out of it.

"The end," he murmured.

Elsie placed a hesitating hand on his sleeve as they passed the brick cottage.

"We must try to think of it as it was, Uncle Howard," said she, "not like that. You must remember it as it was when the red-headed boy lived there."

"I'm afraid," he replied, "that the red-headed boy has gone forever."

"Oh, no, he hasn't," cried Elsie, "for I shall keep him alive."

Converse was silent all the way up the long hill. Then, with a sort of fierceness, he turned upon her.

"I'm a horrid old man," he said, "but I will cheer up, dear. The thing is over now."

Then, after another pause, "Are you quite sure, Elsie, that you want to come with me and be my little girl?"

"Oh, yes," she cried, lifting big, trustful eyes to his. "I do, indeed. I have no one of my own now—no one but you. And you—you're such a good man."

"A good man?" choked Converse. "Yes," he asserted vehemently, "I am a good man—from now on. So help me God!"

And such of the maples as still remained in Chester Street whispered "Amen!"

THE NEAR-BROTHER

By CHART PITT

Butterfly Tom doesn't shrink from the idea of going to the poor house because of pride, but because the poor house cupboard is bare so far as his dog is concerned. "Cold-blooded charity," he calls it, and sticks to the sand dunes.

THE gray gloom of the winter night was settling over the bleak marshes of the Dungeness Duck Reserve. Fragments of mist crept in and out among the tules that shivered beneath the endless drip of the Puget Sound rain. A multitude of shadows fluttered about a weather-beaten hovel that crouched like some misshapen monster among the dunes.

The thin board walls of that dilapidated hut were all that protected Bird Warden Bill Donald from the flailing storms that shrieked down from the open miles of the Pacific and the sharp-toothed particles of sand that rose in blinding clouds from the naked beaches.

Inside the miserable shelter the old man crouched over his driftwood fire, kindled from little fragments of salt soaked bark that had been cast up by the sea. With a gesture of helpless despair Bill Donald pressed a claw-like hand on his stomach where the hunger pains were gnawing, and lifted a haggard face to the window.

On the bluff beyond the flat miles of the salt-marshes, one white house caught the last light of the dying day. Like a star it gleamed through the homeless blackness of the night. But it was an evil star to the hungry man within the hut—something that had hung like a curse above his love-starved life, since that day two years before, when his rheumatic legs began to falter beneath him, and he set out upon the down-hill road that would end at last at the scrap heap. That building with its trim, white-washed face turned toward the Duck Reserve was part of the County Poor Farm.

The thin lips of the bird warden parted in a snarl of hate.

"Summer and winter you've waited for me—watching me grow old. But I'll fool you yet—I'll die among the dunes."

A year ago the ten dollars a month which the bird warden received from the Gun Club was enough to keep the wolf from the door, and allow a few bones for Napoleon, the mournful-eyed mastiff that followed Bill Donald's footsteps on the down-hill road of life.

It was the third winter of the great war. That far fight had boosted the American market basket almost beyond the reach of the well-to-do. Men in the modest walks of life counted each mouthful. For Bill Donald there was none to count.

Although the poor farm was overcrowded with the broken wreckage that drifted back from the heartless battle for bread, the bird warden might have found there a harbor of refuge for his declining years. But they had not a bone to waste upon the dog that had followed Bill Donald like a shadow before the lean days fell.

The mournful-eyed mastiff seemed to sense the altered fortunes of his master. Hours at a time he ranged the beach where the salmon trollers had camped during the summer, searching for bones that had been left from their tables. Sometimes he would come galloping home, and lay a bone in his master's lap—a bone that still held fragments of mouldy meat.

There was a look of confused shame in the honest eyes of the animal each time the man refused his offering. Nor could he seem to understand when the man caught him in his wasted arms, shivering in the grip of an emotion he could not control.

But each time Bill Donald lifted his

head with a new resolve and bared his broken teeth at the immaculate face of the poor house, snarling his defiance at a cold-blooded charity that would rob the pauper of his dog.

THAT morning the fever of hope had whipped a trace of color into the old man's face. A party of Deputies from the Sheriff's office had come stamping past his hut, looking for buried loot along the beach. A store had been robbed in the town across the bay. Ten thousand dollars in coin, that was to have paid a mortgage in the morning, had been carried off, together with a quantity of groceries.

A ham, supposed to be part of the loot, had been found in the camp of a beach comber at the far end of the Duck Reserve. The suspected man was being held while the search for the stolen money went on.

A thousand dollars was offered for the return of the missing coin.

Bill Donald gathered up a handful of scraps that had been left from his supper the night before and divided them with the dog.

"I got to take the biggest half this time, old fellow," the bird warden apologized. "But there'll be lots of good things to eat if I find the money."

He closed the door upon the protesting animal. As he staggered off down the beach to join the hunt, the old lure of buried treasure sent the blood leaping through his withered body, and a new fire flared into his eyes of faded blue.

All day he battled with the flailing winds, searching every nook and corner of the beach where the loot might be buried.

"What's the use?" he muttered at last. "If them fellows can't find it with their young eyes, what chance is there for me?"

In the sullen red glow of the winter sunset, Bill Donald came crawling back to the drift-wood hut, a beaten, wasted old man, caught in the merciless fingers of slow starvation.

THAT night as the bird warden crouched above his speck of fire, he acknowledged that he was fighting a losing battle.

"Guess it's either the poor farm or death," he mumbled in his faded beard.

Napoleon whimpered pitifully in his sleep. The heart of Bill Donald went out to him in the fire-slashed blackness of that miserable hovel among the dunes. He reached over and stroked the animal's head.

"Poor fellow," he muttered. "Why did God make you a dog—without sense enough to hunt up a master that could feed you?"

Bill Donald was old and broken, but he was not afraid to die. There were other things worse than death—and breaking faith with a hungry dog that had trusted him was one of them. His mind was made up beyond any possible change.

Reason whispered to the bird warden, reminding him that he was a man—with a man's immortal soul, that had been purified in the flames of a terrible grief, while the animal was but a speck of clay to live for a few years and then be forgotten—a beast with an instinct that could not rise above a quest of food, and a dumb faithfulness to his master, be that master good or bad.

Yet something deep within the heart of the warden rose up in swift rebellion at the thought. They might die together there among the dunes; but so long as the soul of Bill Donald lived the dog would not be forgotten; and who could say for certain that the shadowy form of a mastiff would not trail him across the hills of eternity, as it had in life.

In a choking voice the old man called the dog from his hungry dreams. With the animal's head upon his knee, he watched the faint flicker of the firelight that was reflected in the trusting eyes. With a numbing pain in his weary heart, Bill Donald accepted the truth. There was a bond of brotherhood between them, two helpless brothers of misfortune, each caught in the cruel claws of the lean year.

The storm freshened its gloating voice about the creaking hut. Bill Donald shivered with a fear he could not control. Even the winds of heaven had been against them in their stubborn battle for life. For the last week the ebb tide should

have left the clam flats bare. But the gale that had been howling in through the Straits of Juan De Fucca had banked the waters of Puget Sound three feet above their natural level, burying the clams beneath them.

Napoleon moved uneasily under the caressing hand of his master. Then he shook himself free of the restraining arms and walked over to the door. He whimpered pitifully as he clawed at the barrier boards.

The old man stumbled to his feet and turned the dog out.

"Perhaps there's a bone somewhere that you missed, or a dead crab that has been drifted up by the storm. You got to have your chance," his tired voice broke at the word, floundering in the grip of despair. "Yes, you got to have your chance—even if there ain't one left for me."

Then once more the bird warden returned to his seat. As he passed the window, the lights from the poor farm danced like a swarm of fireflies before his blurred eyes. But they held no threat now—no temptation.

"Dead men's souls you are," he reviled them. "Souls you have sent to hell with your blind charity."

The old man groped his way to the corner, and returned with a few fragments of fuel. Carefully he arranged the meager splinters upon the coals, and waited with bowed head while they crackled into a flame that filled the little room with its brick red glow.

The low thunder of surf drumming on the outside beaches was as regular as the beating of a human heart. The man found himself tuning his breath to the monotonous measures of the surf. The shadows gathered deeper about him. A blue haze fluttered before the fire. A dreamless stupor settled over him.

Bill Donald was going out with the ebb tide—going without lights or compass—and he did not want to be alone. One thin thread of love still held his weary soul in leash to his famine-stricken body. Like a sleepy child he groped for the dog.

His hand touched the hot ashes of his fire.

Reluctantly he was shocked back into the world of reality. Once more he was conscious of the mournful whining of the wind. For the first time since he came to the Dungeness Duck Reserve he did not fret over its mirthless song. To-night it was tuned to the loveless measures of the bird warden's soul.

The shrieking gale went whipping past, and grew fainter among the dunes. In that momentary lull, the man beside the fire heard the sound of claws upon the rough boards of the door. With a flash of understanding he remembered what it was he had been seeking in the half-darkness of his delirium. With numbed fingers he fumbled with the latch.

Though his weak, old eyes were blinded with tears the bird warden knew that Napoleon had not forgotten him. The very silence of the animal told the man that the dog's mouth was holding something he had found about the abandoned camps. He reached a gnarled hand for the offering which the dumb brother had brought out of the storm-cursed night. Then he reeled back into the red blotch of the firelight, his claw-like fingers clutching a mud-spattered ham.

For a moment Bill Donald writhed in the grip of a thousand confusing memories. Out of that mental whirlwind one fact stood forth in all its sublime grandeur. A starving dog had brought food home untasted—to share it with an old man who had been turned out to die among the dunes.

With eager haste he washed the mud from their treasure, and filled a pan with slices of the odorous meat. The red bark embers sputtered into a cheerful flame, as though they, too, were hungry for the touch of a cooking pot.

Soon the fragrance of the frying ham filled the little room with its pungent breath. Silent-lipped and wistful the near-brothers crouched in the firelight, waiting for the feast. Side by side they shared their supper a few minutes later, a white-haired man who was old and broken, and a mournful-eyed mastiff who waited for the master to divide the food.

At last the stupor of over feeding crept

through the wasted body of the bird warden. He sank down before the dying embers, one hand nestling between the dog's muddy paws, and broken words of endearment upon his bearded lips.

Napoleon whimpered his bewildered protest as he licked the hand that lay so lifeless and spent. Desperately he tugged at the ragged sleeve, and shook the man back from the dreamless stupor into which he had fallen.

"All right, pard—it's growing dark—but you can find the path," Bill Donald mumbled in eerie monotones.

Bill Donald's soul was fumbling among the ashes of the burned out years. He was back again upon the high hills that he loved, following the dizzy goat paths among the crags. He was night-bound upon the trail—and once again a dog was leading him to the camp.

With the vacant eyes of a sleepwalker, the old man stumbled to his feet and followed the dog into the night. The wet, slashing rain whipped some of the stupor from his brain. For a moment the dream-haze lifted, and he dimly realized that he was following Napoleon along the lonely beaches of the Duck Reserve. But that faint flicker of reason was not strong enough to enable him to resist the firm, steady pressure that gripped at his sleeve.

Like an unthinking machine the old man shuffled across the sands, his exhausted body demanding the necessary sleep in spite of its involuntary movements. Suddenly the guiding pressure upon his sleeve was removed. He stumbled and fell, his long arms thrust instinctively forward to protect his face.

Jolted back to the semblance of reason, the bird warden heard the voice of the dog, raised in a challenge of gloating and defiance. Dimly he realized that his numbed fingers were buried in the wet sand, that they were fumbling with something that was not beach-boulders. Then the soul of Bill Donald rose strong and determined in the hour of victory. Relentlessly it lashed his trembling body back from the stupor that gripped it. A laugh fluttered awkwardly from the thin lips that hadn't known a smile since the shadows of the lean year fell.

He lifted a sack of clinking coins up against the faint light of the hidden stars. With childish satisfaction he moved his new found treasure till it blotted out the distant poor farm.

"They picture Justice with a rag around her eyes,"—Bill Donald broke into a forced laugh—"but she can see twice as far as your charitable research. They give you a pair of leather spectacles—and send you out to hunt the poor. But a dog knows—a dog knows. Why, Napoleon and I are too blind to hunt clams and do it right, but his nose found the thing that the sheriff's men couldn't see."

He lowered the bag and groped in the darkness for the dog. The clocks in the town were striking nine—and the red, sinister eyes of the poor farm had been snuffed out according to the rules of the Charity Commission.

Bill Donald braced himself against the flailing wind and whistled a bar of a tune that had been almost forgotten.

The lights had gone out at the poor farm, and the old man took it for a sign.

ANOTHER August story: AT SIX BELLS, SATURDAY, *by Herman Howard Matteson.* Two smugglers and a Secret Service man are among those present at a dinner party. After an unexpected guest has placed the label of an opium tin upon the table, it is thought best to omit the pie course.

THE PRICE OF HATE

By LEROY WALLINGFORD.

The price of a drop of water is sometimes high, though not because of nervousness over crop conditions in the Southwest or the fact that there are only a few million quarts of corn derivative left in the ice chest. The war has nothing to do with this case.

CHALMERS moved hurriedly out of the path of a wave that swept proudly over the damp mark made by its predecessor, and the waves gurgled pleasantly as if amused at the beach-comber's haste. The movement aroused Delcroix, and he followed the example of his partner by rolling over the hot sand as the tide crept stealthily in.

The silence was intense. It seemed to rise out of the panting ocean, a smothering influence that choked the weird notes of the wood pigeons and hushed the cicadas that sent shrill, needle-like noises from the green masses over which the lawyer vines crept like a living net.

"Go on," murmured Delcroix; "your pauses would lead any one to think you were making up the yarn as you went along." He spoke irritably, as if the silence that flung itself upon them each time that Chalmers stopped talking had upset his nerves.

The suntanned features of his companion wrinkled into a cynical sneer.

"Perhaps I am making it up," he said, quietly. "Sometimes—sometimes when I tell it to any one like I am telling it to you, I wonder if I didn't read it in a book years ago, and just fooled myself into the belief that it happened to me."

He paused for an instant and moistened his dry lips.

"That's a lie!" he cried sharply, turning suddenly upon his companion as if he would destroy the doubt occasioned by his last remark. "This is the truth! I never think that I read it, not this yarn, Delcroix! I know that—that this thing—Where did I stop? Oh, I remember! Well, our three Kling divers nuzzled the silt near the Horse Shoe Shoal for weeks, and we piled black-lip shell into the hold by the ton. God, it was rich! We'd sit of a night on the deck of that old lugger while the smell of half the world's nations drifted over the tropic seas, and we'd dream of what we'd do with our profits. He'd do the picturing—that's why I hated him so much afterwards.

"I remember those nights. The darkness just sneaked down from Asia like a drifting blanket, and the yell of a Javanese from the prahu fleet would sting the silence like a whip. Ever listen to the cities calling in the night, Delcroix? Clink of glasses, kid's prattle, sound of shoes on the pavement, and the laugh of women—it just gets into your breast like an iron hand and twists your heart strings till you choke for breath."

A big wave slipped forward quietly and slopped over the bare feet of the two beachcombers, and Delcroix cursed as they rolled out of its path.

"It was on one blazing hot day in September that he cut loose," continued Chalmers. "I pulled across to a whaleboat on the other side of the reef, and coming back I was just dreaming of wheat fields and orange groves two thousand miles away as I stuck the oars into that sea of melted glass. Then I sort of woke up and looked around. The old lugger was squelching down the seas, and that swine was rushing round helping the Klings to spread more cloth.

"Do you know how those little puffs of air race round in the tropics? 'God's breaths' the Orang Lauts call 'em. They hit a boat every five minutes and leave a stillness after them that gives you a cold

shiver. Well, the lugger was getting those little whiffs every now and then, so I put after her. I can feel that pull now. Every ray of the yellow sun went through my back like a poisoned arrow, and the reflection on the oily waters blinded me. He could have potted me with a gun at times when I gained on the boat, but he didn't. He just raced round spreading more cloth, and just when I thought there was a chance of getting aboard, one of those little puffs would get tangled up in the sails, and the old lugger would roll away like a drunken thing.

"I don't know how far I followed him. After a time I couldn't see, but I kept on pulling. I was blinded with the glare from that red-painted ocean, and every time I dipped the oars I screamed in agony. Once I was quiet near. I could hear him yelling at the crew, then he seemed to understand from my actions that I couldn't see, and he stopped talking, and all I could hear was the creaking of the ropes as the old tub got the wind again.

"I was picked up by a trepang-laden proa bound for Macassar, and that kept me three months off his trail. It was three months of hell for me. Then I started out to beat the coast from Thursday Island to Cape Otway in search of him, and every day made me more eager.

"I thought I saw him a score of times. The swine's face sprang from my brain onto the heads of people that didn't resemble him in the slightest. Ever have that happen to you? At Keppel Bay I clutched a pearling skipper who had a beard like his, and I got a knife in the ribs for my foolishness. I met him a thousand times a day—it's truth, Delcroix. In the night I'd spring up thinking he was in the room, and then I would go blind like I did on the day he sailed away and left me at the Horse Shoe Shoal.

"Something seemed to have pulled me to Bluemud Bay. It was the last spot I expected to find him, and when the old lugger caught my eye I couldn't believe that he was still on her. When McKay of the coal hulk told me that he still ran her, I nearly went crazy, and the hours between then and sunset were years of misery.

"I pulled over after sundown, and it was dark when I came under the bows. Things seemed to be coming my way at last. When I started to climb the chains every smell that drifted over Horse Shoe Shoal came to me again, and my brain started to dig out all the pretty little pictures that he used to paint about the times we would have in Lonsdale Street. I felt good, Delcroix.

"I got a shock when I touched the deck. A woman rose out of the shadow and caught me by the arm. 'Doctor?' she asked, and before I could answer she was leading me down the stairs to the cabin, the stairs that I had been up and down ten thousand times before. I knew then that it was he. I felt it. She took me up to the bunk, and there he was tossing in a fever and cursing in all the dialects of Polynesia.

"The doctor stunt suited me when I saw the condition he was in. The woman hadn't slept for three nights, so I sent her away, and sat down to watch him. Somebody has said that the world is only a kraal, and it seemed like it to me just then. Sometimes as I watched him I forgot all about the hunt of the previous ten months and thought we were back piling that black-lip shell into the lugger at the reef.

"About midnight he became conscious, and then he made a motion for water. It was in a bottle on the table, and it was as warm as Torres Straits on a midsummer day. Would you have given him water, Delcroix? You wouldn't! Well, I didn't like to give it to him, so I offered to sell it to him. He didn't recognize me till I told him the price. 'Ten drops of water in exchange for a pearl,' I said, and then he began to understand that Fate had run him up against something."

Delcroix laughed grimly. "A stiff price," he murmured.

"Stiff!" shrieked Chalmers. "Was it stiff? You have no imagination. Why it was a bargain sale price after what I had suffered!

"He refused to buy for two hours, and then his thirst got the better of him. I didn't think he had the grit that he showed then. His lips were black, and his curses

just ran into a long gurgle because his tongue couldn't hack them into word lengths. Then I put up the price. 'Five drops for a pearl,' I said, and he nodded his head toward a black box in the corner of the cabin, and let me see that the key was under his pillow.

"There were fifty-seven beauties in the little bag, and I laid them out near the water bottle so that he could see that I was acting honest. I measured out five drops of the warm liquid and gave it to him, then I put one of the pearls back into the bag and put the bag into my pocket. He bought again in five minutes, then he bought ten drops in one lot, and then fifteen, and then twenty. Ever hear of water going at that price? But I was honest. I only took the price I had fixed, and when there was an extra large pearl I gave him good measure to make up for it.

"I cautioned him against extravagance when he bought a spoonful of the stuff in one lot, and I thought he would expire in an apoplectic fit. He spluttered that much that he lost half of his purchase, and he had to repeat the order. No goldfield shanty ever did a trade like mine that night in Bluemud Bay. D'ye think I was getting a good return for that pull after the lugger?

"He swilled the lot away inside three hours, and when he saw the last pearl go he lost consciousness again and started to babble about the profits that he made on the trip when I had the half share. I left him then. I tiptoed quietly up the stairs and slipped down the chains into the boat. Half way across the Bay I ran into a dingy carrying the doctor from the mission schooner, and I was so darned pleased over the night's business that I directed him to the lugger which his two Kanaka boys had been trying to find for the previous three hours. Then people tell you there is no such thing as luck."

Delcroix buried his legs in the warm sand and sat looking out to sea. "What did you do with the loot?" he asked, after a long pause.

"The loot?" cried Chalmers. "I went down to Peterson's—Oh, what's the use of telling now. The loot? Damn it, it was mine! I couldn't hold it, though. What did I do with it? You're an idiot, Delcroix. You're an infernal idiot!" He stood up and brushed the sand from his tattered trousers, then turned and swung down the trail towards the cluster of huts near which the beche-de-mer fleet lay at anchor.

The Black Cat Club

(*Continued from page 2*)

the author begins to drop these affectations of style. A strain of doubt and uncertainty runs through the story from the moment that Nicholas lands on Greek soil, and it is a relief to find that his true love is waiting for him. But the suspense is merely relaxed a trifle, and from that point is increased to the end of the story. The transfer of the viewpoint from Nicholas to his mother is neatly accomplished, shifting as he drops off to sleep and she continues to be awake. The most artistic touch of all is the psychological study of the mother, explaining why, without being cruel or avaricious, she urges the murder. Although the murder is passed over with scarcely a word, the horror of the deed is heightened by the well-timed appearance of Aphrodite. Her explanation makes a fitting climax, which the author has made dramatic by careful preparation.

Tainted Money is an exceptionally good story (with the accent on the "good") for the young author who believes that there is nothing new under the sun. There have been countless stories of revenge, but this one is unique in novelty, simplicity and effectiveness of the plan to "get even." It seems a bit unreasonable that Joe Rivers should carry two skunks in his pocket all the time without an accident, but, as the author says, they had been reared by Joe and doubtless he was some trainer. The direct narrative of the story wins for it ready approbation; there are no superfluous details, no affectations of style, no unnecessary characters. The author makes no point of being analytical; the story's the thing with him, and a roughness or two in diction or style even add to the effect of the chatty narrative, appropriate to the place and persons of the story. No other title would have fitted the story so well; no other character would

have reasonably selected from the means at hand so effective an instrument for the accomplishment of his purpose. When the denouement comes it is so simple and yet so complete that it tickles the sense of humor of the most sedate. A clever little thread woven into the story is supplied by the punctilious doorman and his characteristic "'Good evening, sir,' with the accent on the 'good.'" The familiar phrase "Your nose knows" fits into the substance of the plot and will serve to keep this story in the reader's mind for some time.

Peter Grimwood Goes To War is a very modern short story, based on the Liberty Loan and the Selective Draft and tinctured with a pathetic echo of the Civil War. Peter Grimwood is our most prevalent type of traitor, while his wife, the selfish, senseless Vangie, is another well known type. The elder Peter's desire to expiate his failure to enter the Civil War, by sending one of his own blood to the great world conflict, is an excellent starter for some good character delineation. The slothfulness and cowardice of Peter the younger seem to be destined to thwart the grandfather's desire, so the older man buys bonds. That in taking this step the old man should overlook the most obvious business detail for his own protection and that of the fortune he has been shrewd enough to make is allowable only on the supposition of senility and his obsession to turn his plowshares into swords. His will, secretly made in favor of Steve and Nellie, although circumvented by trickery, is a part of the story's triumph—for thereby two Grimwoods, instead of one, go to pay the debt due his country and to Lomax, his proxy. The "troy" and "avoirdupois" weights and Vangie's boast of her patriotism, while amusing and true to life, are rather a drag to the end of the story, pulling it down to an anti-climax and turning the mind of the reader from the pivot-point of supreme satisfaction to a somewhat hazy proposition.

Cupid's Gosling is a pleasing story, although one that is somewhat too sustained in length for so slight a theme. It is thoroughly wholesome and presents an attractive picture of a love affair that develops in the shop of a friendly and philosophical tailor. It seems doubtful if the skilled manipulation of a tailor's gosling upon the drooping shoulder of a young man's coat could be of such significance; and the match making is perhaps too solicitously carried out, even to disposing of the sister who is out of the picture. The monologue is expertly handled, since it gives the reader a clear conception of the five characters mentioned as well as the "bushelman" and his shop. The same plot given in a less interesting way would hardly be worth while.

A Dry Finish is almost purely the plot type of story, a type that is always interesting because it possesses the same elements of surprise as does a good game of chess. One feels certain that the poor pawns are doomed to failure, yet hangs breathlessly over their moves. The story possesses the negative interest of revealing a thief's schemes and a positive one of bringing them to naught by a turn of circumstances which dates back to the thief's allowing a friendly bartender to wrap the stolen money in quart whiskey-cartons. One feels sure that the two little registry slips are going to get Meecham into trouble but this is simply to give him something to worry about and at the same time furnish the reader with the wrong clue. The author depicts the final scene with considerable power; and the insignificance of the event that ruins Meecham's hopes of financial freedom speaks eloquently of the power of the trivial.

Bret Harte and others have made us so familiar with the two old partners who think the world of each other that we cannot wipe our eyes with the same sincerity when we meet them again in *Some Joke*. The author tells his story from one point of view and then tells it over again from another, and at best there is not much point to tell. There is some confusion in the identities of the joker and the good sport, which is only cleared up on a second reading. Without changing the wording, but rearranging the paragraphs so to emphasize the manner in which old Bob thought he found his partner rather than the joke which the joker thought he played, the story could be made more dramatic, logical, and effective.

Not even a Thesaurussed imagination could invest the theme of gravel and street paving with thrills and rapture; but as an illustration of the importance of chance in the affairs of men, and the auxiliary tendencies of inanimate things, *The Land Turtle* has its value. The "turtle" itself is not, as might be inferred from the title and prologue of the story, the object of paramount interest. The story proper is concerned with the construction under difficulties of a stretch of road; and it is the contractor's faith and plodding determination to "carry on" in spite of hard luck, and harder heads all around trying to discourage him, that creates what little suspense there is. Who has not seen the counterpart of Joe Norton's old land turtle? And although one reads about it with interest, it is with the realization that the author has relied too much upon it for the making of his story.

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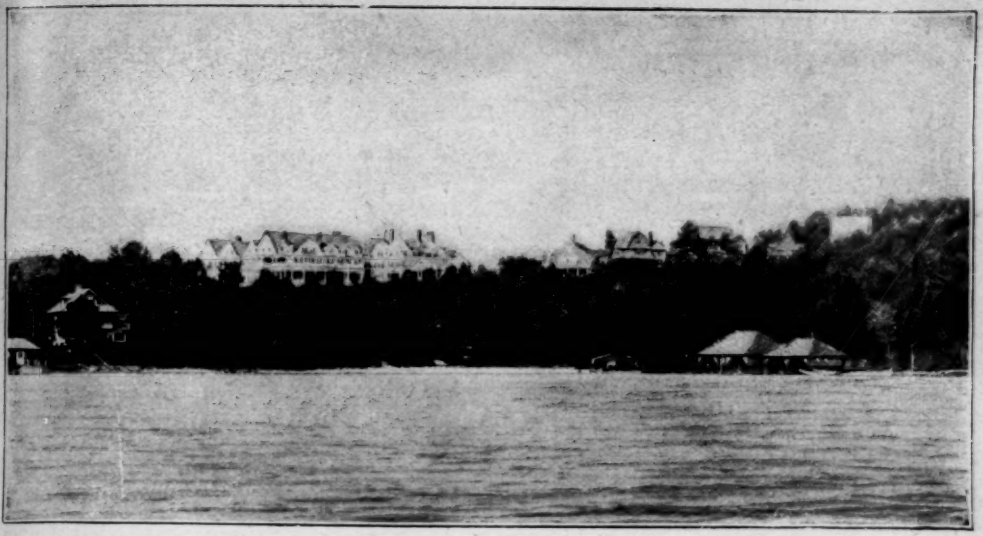

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